

Cultivating Suspicion:

An ethnography of corporeal strategies deployed against vulnerability to crime in Observatory, Cape Town

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A major dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master's of Social Science in Social Anthropology.

Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2016

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Abstract:

This ethnographic study explores how people deal with suspicion and navigate the fear of crime in the Observatory suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. The study grapples with the question of how the neighbourhood watch, as a recently revived institution, operates. It analyses the institution and relationships within and around it as an alternative source of trust to the state in combatting crime and its wider impact on lived sociality in the suburb and, perhaps, beyond. The focus of the study lies in understanding the strategies people employ habitually in order to create a sense of security in a context where the anticipation of violence permeates various everyday routines. In analysing strategies of living through insecurities, I focus on examining material and highly visible security measures, such as patrol cars and barbed wires, and engage with the body as a site of social and political memory and struggle, while considering the roles it takes on in the face of perceived precariousness. This dissertation offers an insight in to how the body is deployed as an instrument or buffer to deal with insecurity and crime vulnerability. The quality of public life becomes compromised through embodied strategies of (in)security and vulnerability as employed by the neighbourhood watch. The capacity of a constantly perceived presence of criminal violence in shaping individual and institutional bodies and strategies constitutes the main focus of this study. While the study does not identify the roots of crime as is currently practice with related studies of crime in South Africa, it illuminates the engagement with its perceived presence and thus moves away from a fixed victim-perpetrator dichotomy that has dominated the public discourse.

Acknowledgments:

I am glad to have the opportunity to go on the record in expressing my gratitude to all those supportive of me and this research project. My informants have, of course, been the incentive sparks of the content and the stabilising pillars of this work. It was not only their interesting and intellectually stimulating views on life that I could learn from - but also their trust in my abilities as a researcher and as a person that meant a lot to me.

It feels insufficient to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Divine Fuh, in such brief words as he managed to help me gain confidence in my abilities as a human and as a researcher. His wonderful personality, wisdom and inspiring academic talent are much appreciated and have had a great impact on me.

My parents, Birgit and Paul Junck, have never been anything but encouraging and I am deeply thankful for their support in any of my endeavours in life.

Abbreviations:

ASA: Anthropology Southern Africa

DA: Democratic Alliance

EFF: Economic Freedom Front

GPS: Global Positioning System

HSRC: Human Science Research Council

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

NW: Neighbourhood Watch

OCA: Observatory Civic Association

Obsid: Observatory Improvement District

ONW: Observatory Neighbourhood Watch

OPF: Observatory Police Forum

SABC: South African Broadcasting Corporation

Sanef: SA National Editors' Forum

SAPS: South African Police Service

SPCA: Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

SWEAT: Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.0. The making of bodies, places and spaces in Observatory

On the 4th of September 2015, four uniformed members of the South African Police Service (henceforth, SAPS) fatally shot ‘a suspect [robber] at close range after he had dropped his pistol and kick[ed] him as he lay on the pavement’¹. The man was identified as a criminal suspect. He was carrying a pistol and had, allegedly, attempted a robbery. After the man was defenceless on the ground, the mission of the police to disarm a threat turned into something more raw - and more socially complex. The incident reminds of the bitter aftertastes brought along with a series of cases of South African police brutality in the past, namely the 2012 Marikana massacre in which 34 striking mine workers were shot by police. This massacre has become synonymous with the difficult relationships between civilians and the very institution that seeks to distribute a sense of security. The incident described was thus not an isolated one but, in my opinion, significant in its stirring of questions of societal trust and spatial divisions. It clearly shows the lack of trust in the ability of the state to offer protection to its citizens as well as a constant concern with ‘crime waves’ in South Africa, often believed to originate from the economically fragile outskirts of the cosy city cores. The two components, suspicion and fear, form a dangerous social symbiosis in that they create a deep-seated notion of instability and vulnerability. Using the Observatory Neighbourhood Watch (henceforth, ONW) as a case study, this ethnography shows how the impact of this sense of vulnerability on notions of being in a space become very apparent through mundane everyday activities and routines. The study engages deeply with questions of how people live through uncertainty; how people continue to be in a space they consider to be unsafe; how relationships of trust are forged; how suspects are imagined; and how suspicion is cultivated.

Practices of fencing off houses and communities, often equipped with various security technologies, the employment of private security guards and the networking of communities in watching, finding and, ideally, criminally charging individuals classified as ‘suspicious’ by them are drastic expressions of complicated societal relations that are intrinsically framed by feelings of social insecurity and vulnerability. Criminologies of the ‘alien other’, representing criminals as ‘dangerous members of distinct racial and social groups who bear little resemblance to “us” (Garland, 1996: 461) transforms into a fear of crime (Pain 2008). Such constructions of fear and danger play important roles in invoking support for particular criminal

¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/africa-police-filmed-shooting-unarmed-suspect-dead-151102192137128.html>

justice strategies (Douglas, 1992). Crime and the fear thereof also constitute futile ground for an economy of ‘security’ with an increased blurring of the lines between private and public police. In 1999, the institute of security studies already found the South African private security to be a R10-billion-per-year industry with a growing tendency (Irish, 1999), now occupying one of the top ranks of countries with the largest private security sector in the world². Since the 1970s, the industry has grown up to 30 per cent per annum with there being four security guards for every uniformed member of the police at the turn of the century (Irish, 1999). A CNN article from 2013 even found the private security in South Africa to be outstripping both, the country’s police and army³.

The amount of money that is invested in fencing and equipping buildings, people and areas with appliances and accessories that are marketed as promoting safety (and that are largely taxed and thus highly profitable for the state when promoted and sold) are undoubtedly enormous. New technologies and media play an important role in feeding into this profitable trend of wrapping oneself into a layer of security mechanisms and forces in South Africa. Security strategies do not always take the form of private guards or alarm systems. For instance, Cape Townians have the option of signing up for a Short Message Service (SMS) that informs about ‘suspicious behaviour’ for a monthly fee. Cape Cell Alert is advertised as ‘a dynamic, instant method of reporting suspicious behaviour in your neighbourhood to all your neighbours with one SMS [...] The concept is based on STRENGTH IN NUMBERS [original emphasis] – the more people registered on the system in a specific neighbourhood, the safer that neighbourhood becomes’⁴. Here, and in all other forms of commercialised as well as the business of state-provided security, essentialised difference materialises through the figure of a ‘suspect’, affecting community relations and ideas of *relationality* (Butler, 2011) in different contexts. In Cape Town, the colonial mother city of South Africa, fear and suspicion become processed and embodied in specific ways that are as socially challenging as they are academically intriguing.

This ethnographic study thus focuses on strategies employed to cope with notions of vulnerability to crime in the particular context of suburban Observatory, Cape Town - or ‘Obz’, as it is known in local parlance. The recently revived ONW and its policing strategies will serve as a case study in a critical engagement with the particular ways in which a fear of crime or what I will be referring to as an ‘air of violence’ translates onto embodied practice in this

² <https://africacheck.org/reports/does-sa-have-the-largest-private-security-industry-in-the-world/>

³ <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/02/08/business/south-africa-private-security/>

⁴ <http://www.capecellalert.co.za/pages/home.asp>

particular context. Specifically, I argue that notions of being unsafe and vulnerable lead to the cultivation, embodiment and performance of suspicion as this dissertation outlines through various everyday practices in Observatory, and by looking at the local Neighbourhood Watch as an ethnographic example. I look at ONW as a space in which perceived *precarity* (Butler, 2008), fuelled by a fear of crime, becomes negotiated and transformed through the idea of *relationality* (Butler, 2011) and an increased notion of agency. In the process, and through the different forums of social interaction (chat groups, committee meetings and patrols), a particular idea of ‘the suspect’ or ‘criminal other’ (Brown, 1995:47), seen as a constant threat to one’s well-being, impacts notions of being in a space and concrete embodied practices. It also manifests in the spatial channelling of bodies that are conceptualized in certain ways.

The study employs a phenomenological ethnographic approach, following Csordas’s (1994) methodology that emphasises the immediate lived experience. According to Csordas (1990:5), “the body is not an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the *subject* of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture”. Neighbourhood watch organisations can be understood as urban renewal projects to return governance to the state (Jensen, 2006). As a state ally, the ONW co-produces a particular kind of social space. In order to capture the experiential aspects of the space, the study focuses on the embodiment of suspicion, as suspicion is not only something learned and performed, but also impacts on social relationships in different ways and features within different social platforms. I consider this topic highly relevant as embodied suspicion has a considerable impact on communities, especially when readily and widely shared through technologies like WhatsApp⁵ and through its visualisation in the form of pictures of ‘suspects’ that dominate local forums and news.

⁵ A messaging application for smartphones, enabling the exchange of texts, recorded voice messages, pictures and has a phone call function in many countries. The program also offers a variety of ‘emojis’, which are symbols and smiley faces conveying a growing spectre of emotions that can be as complex as ‘crying while laughing’. In the context of the ONW the application is mainly used for texts, snapshots of ‘suspects’ and emoji.



Figure 1: Areal map of Observatory⁶

Figure 2: Areal map of Observatory with patrolling sectors marked in different colours. Blue, red, orange, green and purple sector mark indicate the different patrol groups who focus on the areas they reside in⁷.



⁶ Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Observatory_OSM_map.svg

⁷ Source: ONW archive.

1.1. Motivations

My interest in the fear of crime was triggered by a particular personal experience erupting from a routine Tuesday afternoon in the early summer months of 2014 in my home in Observatory, Cape Town. Taking an afternoon nap on my couch, I woke to the sound of my backpack zipper and a strange man putting my belongings inside it. With this severe disruption of my inherently private and safe space went my feeling of security within my own home. Under verbal threats to kill me if I scream and continuous eye contact with me the man quickly took my camera, phone as well as my laptop and grabbed my bicycle on the way out before running off into the streets, enlivened by rush hour movements. The objects he stole were key in facilitating my mobility - physically in the form of my bicycle and passport, financially through my credit card and money as well as socially through the technical means to communicate over short and long distances (with my family in Germany). The dissertation which I lost on my laptop was meant to ensure my degree and thus open societal doors of possibilities. Through this and other threatening encounters I started realising how my behaviour patterns became affected and I found myself adopting some of the ‘friendly’ suggestions that were made to me upon my arrival in Cape Town, planting a sporadically growing seed of suspicion.

Experiences like this or predictions of similar scenarios, evidenced by the visually domineering security measures in Cape Town, reflect socially in various forms, for instance through the new WhatsApp chat groups in the neighbourhood that are meant to help track and anticipate patterns of crime. Being shared in different ways, individual stories such as my own can easily be turned into ‘Mythostats – events that, in their singularity, come to signify collective being, collective trauma’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006:31). Crime and the fear of crime attack the social, political and economic fabric of cities (Banister & Fyfe 2001) and become fuelled through ‘hyper-real’ events, such as live-documented robbery. The constant and endless retelling of particular stories become the ‘measure of a traumatised citizenry transcending its differences’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006:35) and is manifested through social practices that are yet to be explored.

The Neighbourhood Watch and the suburb

When I arrived in Observatory for the first time in 2010, without having seen any other part of South Africa previously, what fascinated me the most were the small houses that gave off the

impression to be part of a dream-like landscape, put together by somebody with Lego stones. Coming from Offenbach, a town right next to Frankfurt (Germany), where only the economically well-off might be able to live in an actual house and most spaces are dominated by tall apartment buildings, Observatory also seemed to give off a scent of opportunity to me. Here, I thought, almost everyone seems to manage to live the house-family-dog life that credit providers would like to be everybody's aspiration. I enjoyed walking the quiet streets and chatting to people crossing my path (something that people in German cities usually do not do). Within the last five years, I have lived in different southern suburbs in Cape Town and experienced on a daily basis the outcomes and various intersections of the intrinsic social inequality that make the instable ground for this Lego dreamland. For a while, the one-storey Victorian houses in Observatory lost their charm for me, the cracks in their facades became more visible and the stretch of bars and cafes, dotting the lower Main Road that runs right across the 2000-household suburb, seemed less alluringly quirky than they used to. The emptiness of the street signified not peacefulness any longer but potential danger instead – even in broad daylight. However, even though my corporeal being in this space could not remain 'unspoiled' by stories and experiences of social instability, Observatory continues to fascinate me as it constitutes a unique socio-cultural space. The hosting of interns, students and backpackers while also being attractive to people from the surrounding areas due to its accessibility and vibrant night life render Observatory a place of social diversity. At the same time, people who understand themselves to be local leaders or spokespeople make a conscious effort to ensure that Observatory remains attractive to younger families, who, I am told by the ONW organiser, started leaving the area around the end of the last century and are now seen to be slowly returning.

However, this is something I could not statistically validate. Allan, the operations director of the Observatory Improvement District (henceforth, *Obsid*) commented that this may, for now, just be a perception. There has been quite a notable socioeconomic shift from 1994, as a district representative and hobby historian Tom Andrews told me. Before 1994 there were more 'white working class' families with children. 'But apartheid was not strictly enforced in Observatory', Tom adds. From there, 'Coloured' families bought local houses in close corporations which did not have a race attributed to them and thus got around the apartheid laws. Their area was therefore rather racially mixed. Over time, child-rich families sieged in Observatory. The suburbs' own Boys High School and Girls High School were closed. The Junior School only exists by bringing children in from outside the suburb, mostly from the townships. With quite

drastically increased property prices in the area in the last few years a process of gentrification has become visible, building a trend towards young middle-class families again. Interestingly, while gentrification is often associated with decreasing crime levels, this is not the case in Observatory, where crime is continuously reported by the local news as peaking.⁸

Observatory is also known for its backpackers, the only place outside of the city centre that offers a selection of comparably cheap short-term accommodation in Cape Town. It serves as a shelter and entertainment-sphere for tourists from all over the world and has students and interns entering in fluctuating streams, enjoying the economic freedom to be ‘globe trotters’. At the same time there is a perceived threat to the bohemian image and lifestyle that lead to the establishment of the organisation *Obsid*, approximately five years ago. The suburb Observatory is understood as liberal and progressively transformative. The recent revival of the ONW after the local Improvement District, a non-profit organisation, financed through increased property taxes and meant to ‘top up’ state services in the area, was considered unhelpful in decreasing crime. The ONW consists of a core of locals that are caught up in different local networks. The private security company, hired by the *Obsid*, is not invested in making Observatory safer to its residents and often reported in the ONW chat-groups as sleeping on duty with a number of members realising that this is due to low pay and lack of connectedness to the space. As a community and by making use of local knowledge and relationships, the ONW is thus meant to create a notion of being safe in the suburb. The ONW generates this notion through a feeling of being interconnected and an ability to develop strategies against crime. These strategies, however idealised in theory, often led to the reproduction of a social space in disharmony with prevailing ideals of equality and harmonious living side-by-side as a group that incorporates the cultural heterogeneities of the Cape.

The main responsibility of the *Obsid* (although its official duty is general community upkeep) is considered to be crime prevention, the hiring of security companies and the putting up and managing of cameras (see monthly publications of community paper *Obslife*). When the *Obsid* came into being, the previously existing neighbourhood watch (then called *ObsWatch*) was abandoned. The Obswatch however was a group of professionals working at security firms who volunteered their time, John explained to me. In 2007 the watch group was revived after a spate of murders in the area but died down again due to a lack of people willing to patrol and the hiring of a private security company covering the space of the whole suburb. The revival of the

⁸ For a broader historical outline see Nevin (2015).

Neighbourhood Watch (henceforth, NW) at the beginning of 2015 was induced by a dissatisfaction with the work of the private security company and overlapped with an increase of young families in the neighbourhood and a perceived increase of crime in the area. This ties in with a socio-demographic shift of the organization that was previously dominated by older men of light skin colour and constitutes now a comparably colourful social mix. The group used to be quite 'militant', as long-term organiser John puts it. In spite of this persisting (and still damaging, as many new members insist) image of having zero tolerance, for example towards vagrants, it was the lack of activity that dried up the organisation for the past three years. The new version aims to connect to a neighbourhood that John describes as more 'academic'. For this purpose and to encourage people to patrol, the phrase 'neighbourhood watch' is either avoided or presented as a re-interpretation of the dusty and militant 'all-white-male' patrol group. The ONW currently constitutes a fascinating context to investigate how community structures, institutions and individual notions of what it means to occupy a particular space at a given point in time tie in with one another. I critically engage with a notion of 'community', implying common interest, and highlight the divergent concerns about crime that inhabits this geographical area. Discussions within the different channels of communication used by the ONW members also make it clear that individuals may occupy different subject positions simultaneously with the relative importance shifting according to context.

Many members of the ONW use the different channels of the organisation to critically discuss and intellectualise issues of social inequality based on racial markers. Yet, the fear of crime that I found to be enhanced by the 'suspect' or bodies characterized as 'suspicious' by ONW members reflect what Pain (2008) calls 'white people fears', often focussing on 'other' ethnic groups (see also Merry, 1981; Taub et al., 1984; Smith, 1986; Chiricos et al., 1997) and manifesting in the fear of social proximity to 'other' racial or ethnic groups. Pain (2008) refers to Smith (1984) and his finding that 'one way of managing and negotiating danger: labelling criminals with certain social identifiers increases personal feelings of power and security. In some localities where public racism is prominent, it provides another dimension of fear that consolidates spatial boundaries and control' (Pain, 2008:377). Seekings (1996) shows that urban anxieties in the South African context are not a new development and have a certain history. Apartheid politics enforced the spatial segregation of the space into an urban core, the surrounding suburbs and the local slums or so-called 'townships', purposefully located at a distance to the urban core. In regards to, for example, male township youth (framed as a 'lost generation'), Seekings (1996)

shows that the image of being doomed to be a devalued part of society while carrying the potential for the destruction of the latter has a history, closely tied to the anti-Apartheid movement. While racism and social injustice are often critically discussed in the different forums of the ONW, concrete practices often conflict with expressed ideals of sociality.

The mission statement of the ONW on the Facebook page reads as follows:

The neighbourhood watch creates a sense of community by having members looking out for each other. Being observant, communicating and reporting any suspicious behaviour all aids in the prevention of crime and creates good neighbourliness.⁹

Neighbourliness', the ways in which people are connected, relates and communicates crime in 'Obs' and its impact on the ways in which people remember, experience themselves in the present and plan for the future, impacting on their agency (see Emirbayer & Mische 1998). The social webs woven through the organisation and tended to within it are sometimes loosely - and sometimes closely - knit and can take physical or virtual forms, depending on individual needs. *Relationality* (Butler, 2011) and 'talking crime' as strategies in combatting vulnerability to crime encourage a dominant public memory (see Appadurai, 2003) in conflict with notions of 'Obs' as a social space and in continuation with an infamous South African historical tendency of tying space to racial categories. The particular ways of relating in the suburb will reoccur in the chapters to follow and will tease out the body in its confrontation with *precariousness* as a 'playground' of both, oppression and resistance where hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices, authority and subversion, power and defiance meet (Mbembé, 1992).

The ONW constitutes a suburban volunteer group that aims to reclaim local streets during what is experienced as a peak of crime. These streets are associated with criminal activity instead of playing children and mutually supportive community spirits. The neighbourhood is understood and largely lived in as a space shaped by insecurity and unpredictability. The feelings of uncertainty resulting from this understanding of the space, simultaneously characterised as liberal and bohemian, finds its expression in the forming of an idea of a 'suspect'. It is this 'suspect' that is looked for during street patrols and, in an abstracted form, becomes the topic of discussion in various chat groups that are meant as information technologies, generating an awareness of crime incidents. It is here that the physical and the metaphorical ideas, hopes for

⁹ https://www.facebook.com/obswatch/info/?tab=page_info

the future and perceived present reality of the suburb conflict. The point of intersection materialises in the cultivated, symbolic figure of a criminal and moral intruder, justifying various mechanisms that generate notions of increased safety and security. The conflict becomes clear in the different forms of local networking, which lead to the overlapping and co-producing of particular life worlds in different ways. In this study, I investigate the particular mechanisms deployed in combatting vulnerability and the forms of embodiment tied to the life worlds produced in the process. I tease out their daily intricacies. I also explore networking and *relationality* (Butler, 2011) as strategies to combat vulnerability, leading to the overlapping and co-producing of particular life worlds. As an existential ground for the functionality of the NW, the ways in which rather powerful social webs are established, managed and tended to are of great interest in this study. An analysis of the practices of the ONW emphasise just how cultural practices change along with the alterations and shifts of spatial and bodily contours.

The ONW as a body - and bodies within the ONW

For some of the ONW members it is enough to be a nominal part of the group in order to feel safer; for others, the physical patrols are a calling and source of social confidence. Still others see their part in stimulating critical discussions of sociality and equality in virtual forums and committee meetings while some do their part as members ‘behind the scenes’ in the form of administrative work or lonesome patrols. Whatever one’s niche may be in the organisation or what the accessories increasing a notion of safety may entail, the ONW is an organisation that encourages the literal and symbolic coming together of bodies in the contestation of other bodies, necessarily conceptualised as different and threatening. Pain (2002) argues that the

fear of violent crime is best understood within a framework of social and spatial exclusion, though the nature of the power relations involved is sometimes obscured by the ‘othering’ of criminals, which takes various forms and is practised at various levels (Pain, 2008:366).

I understand the power of the social ties woven through the organisation ONW (describe later in ethnographic detail) to be a web of subtle exchanges of power (Foucault, 1978) as opposed to a unidirectional force. Rather than individuals ‘ganging up’ on ‘outsiders’ or perceived threats to their comfortable and safe being in this locale, the ONW is a cultural space in which an idea of ‘proper’ social conduct is frequently a topic of discussion with different opinions clashing. Yet, ‘the suspect’, constitutes the conceptual glue that holds people who understand

themselves to be liberal and progressive in this space associated with the ‘old days’ when social and racial profiling and stereotyping was a state-implemented norm. The idea of ‘the suspect’ and its impact on corporeal strategies, deployed against vulnerability to crime by members of the NW, are indicative of how social relationships can pan out and become shaped by this organisation and cultural space. This is highly relevant as:

There is an urgent need to look at the relationship between bodies and places, not because of an academic requirement to sort out paradoxes, but because the ways in which we live out body/place relationships are political (Nast & Pile, 2005:1).

In suburban Cape Town, a context in which stereotypes of the criminal continue to be highly racialised (Jansen, 2008), a close look at the ambiguous and embodied engagements with these stereotypes is of great concern. According to Shields (1996), bodies are restricted and enclosed by the places that they inhabit, but they also themselves incarcerate and bind: ‘these confinements shape a social architecture of the psyche: someone somewhere confines, while someone elsewhere is confined. These restraints on bodies and places are not simply material or discursive, but fantasized and lived’ (Shields, 1996:6). It is the social texture (or architecture) resulting from this process of forming a connection between particular kinds of bodies while confining others that are of interest in this study. Spatial relationships, coming together to make bodies and places through the body and through places, are exemplified through the body itself. In looking at the cultivation, embodiment and performance of suspicion I emphasise the plurality of meanings and various nuances of experience in managing the fear of crime.

Bodies in Observatory map out a particular political terrain. In context in which the physical well-being of a person can only be insufficiently secured by the state and other societal structures, people live in *precarity* (Butler, 2008). In Cape Town, the dependency on others (*precariousness*) and *precarity* (Butler, 2008) manifests in various ways for differently conceptualised bodies. The ONW is an expression of *precariousness* (Butler, 2008) in the suburb and leads to suburban, middle-class bodies scanning the neighbourhood for bodies understood as foreign and out-of-place. The cultivated ‘suspect’ and his impact on embodied behaviour and performance within the comforting space of mutual support and apparently shared interests within the organisation thus increases notions of agency for a particular kind of body while increasing levels of social insecurities for the individuals matching the idea of the ‘phantom suspect’. Similar to Rich (1984), I understand the body to be a site of struggle, with its geopolitics being produced through unequal power relations. Through the different social

positions that people occupy, the body is rendered both, mobile and channelled, fluid and fixed, into places (Nast & Pile, 2005:2). In Observatory, the scanning and categorising of bodies and the practices and strategies related to it have a conceptual and corporeal impact on bodies considered 'suspect'. I pay particular attention to the ways in which bodies are made up, confined and mobilized in Observatory through an ethnographic analysis of the practices and talk of the local NW.

Foucault (1977:477) asserts that dividing practices are 'constructed via the use of particular discourses to justify social and, at times, spatial divisions between various categories of humans'. He also warned that it is not a simple task to identify a specific discourse and understands these to be difficult to decipher as multiple discursive elements can come into play in various strategies. South Africa's history invites practices of exclusion to be channelled into a racial discourse, especially with regards to communities that are gated and in some way of a monotone socio-demographic make-up. As the fear of crime 'relates to the immediate details of environment and neighbourhood, it is historically and socially specific' (Pain, 2008:379). In exposure to traumatically experienced insecurity, prevalent economic and spatial divisions as well as a history of racialising crime that drag along notions of 'the criminal suspect' encourage the re-production of social spaces, promising opportunities for some whilst demonising others - but not without being ideologically challenged and experientially manoeuvred by the ONW members I encountered. The cultivation, embodiment and performance of suspicion and the forms of *relationality* (Butler, 2011) linked to it create a particular and ambiguous social space in Observatory.

In her fascinating analysis of trust and rougeness in Observatory, Nevin found that 'it is through trust that forms of reciprocity and belonging are negotiated, especially in particular urban spaces' (Nevin 2015:6). In doing my own fieldwork in suburban Observatory and in looking at the ONW as well as other local institutions and individuals, I found particular forms of communicating and networking to be an expression of a fear of crime, fed by particular kinds of discourses. Yet, at the same time, I found them first and foremost to be expression of a need for *relationality* (Butler, 2011) in a context in which crime is constructed as a reality to be dealt with in a pragmatic manner. I therefore want to extend Nevin's (2015) ethnographic findings by conducting a research on the forms of distrust that go hand in hand with efforts to belong, in spite of continuously reported cases of crime. The trauma experienced by many members during criminal attacks and the processing of reported experiences of others through the different

channels of the ONW group and other media were, at first, often put aside as events that have simply occurred. Yet, experiences of crime and the anticipation of further incidents surfaced as having a corporeal fullness to them, with its expressions being found in practices of patrolling, communicating and specific strategies of security.

1.2. Research questions

Grappling with the kinds of bodily strategies that people develop and deploy in the face of *precarity* and *precariousness* (Butler, 2008), I initially began my fieldwork asking the following questions: In what ways do discourses of crime affect how people live? How do people continue to be in a space considered unsafe? What kinds of bodily strategies are employed to manufacture a sense of safety? How do people who have experienced violence through crime make sense of their experience (Caldeira (2000) calls this ‘symbolic labour’? What kinds of relationships become fostered? Where do the perceived responsibilities lie in assuring what is understood as the well-being of individuals and the community in general?

During my ten months in the field I found notions of the ‘suspect’ to be very dominant in my observations, interviews and the digital data from the chat groups that I analysed. It became clear that it was something or someone specific the participants had in mind when referring to a ‘suspect’. Yet, interestingly, when asked for a description of the same, the participants hesitated and insisted that their ways of knowing who is ‘dodgy’ or ‘suspicious’ is not something that can be explained, but something one learns by being in this space (suburban Cape Town) for a lengthy period of time. It is this idea of cultivating and embodying suspicion that helped me narrow my research questions down to:

- a) How does suspicion become cultivated, embodied and performed in Observatory?
- b) What kinds of impacts does the cultivation, embodiment and performance of suspicion have on social relationships within the community?
- c) How is a particular phantom ‘suspect’ imagined and where does its capacity lie to motivate Neighbourhood Watch members to patrol and scan the suburb?

1.3. Chapter outline

This introductory chapter has provided the reader with an overall understanding of the intentions and motivations of this research and the kind of social environment in which it was

conducted. This will be helpful in placing the consecutive ethnographic chapters and making sense of my attempts to give an impression of what it means to live in suburban Observatory and in confrontation with a perceived peak of crime at this very point in time. To this effect, chapter 2 looks at people taking the roles of patrollers in the neighbourhood and the strategies and accessories of security and stability used by them. It also engages with the different forms that fear of crime and notions of security can take. Subsequently, chapter 3 focuses on the 'suspect' as a motivator in patrolling the streets. I illustrate how suspicion becomes a cultivated and embodied practice. Suspicion is thus seen as a relevant part of the bodily being in a place and the everyday. In chapter 4, I engage with patrolling as a performance and opportunity to construct a better future and to re-conceptualise oneself as an agent. As information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a great part in communicating about crime, understanding 'suspects' and cultivating particular forms of suspicion, the last ethnographic chapter (chapter 5) provides an in-depth analysis of them. The final chapter leaves the reader with conclusions that are not final - but instead open channels for new thoughts on the subject.

Chapter 2 - Contextualising crime

Abstract:

This chapter offers an impression of the theoretical and contextual backdrop of what it means to live through insecurities in suburban Cape Town on a daily basis. It outlines the theoretical concepts used in grappling with vulnerability in this context and emphasises the usefulness of seeing and reading protective mechanisms through the body. The chapter continues describing the quality of fearing crime, in the suburb but in Cape Town and South Africa as a whole. The impact on notions of safety, security and social comfort will become evident in this section. Finally, the chapter engages with literature on topics of crime in South Africa and beyond and shows that the ethnographic approach employed in this study is important in highlighting individual agencies within a context of fear. Understanding the theory and literature used to engage with precariousness and fear as well as the wider social circumstances will enable the reader to see the relationships and daily grittiness in the suburb that will be the focus of the ethnographic chapters to follow in their ambiguous colourfulness.

1. Theoretical framing

Butler (2009) and Allison (2012) understand *precarity* as being related to expectations and, particularly, to the consequences of their non-fulfilment (such as secure labour). This has social ramifications in terms of relationships and social practices. *Precariousness* as a concept is described as a condition shared for all human life, the exposure to others from the moment of birth and the relying on others (Allison 2012). The concept mainly refers to the political and economic conditions under which people attempt to secure their lives. Being exposed to *precarity* and *precariousness* (Butler, 2008) creates a sense of vulnerability, which, I argue, is a condition imposed upon Cape Townians through an ‘air of violence’.

I focus on the embodiment of suspicion because suspicion is not only something learned, cultivated and performed, but also has its (negative) impact on social relationships. It becomes relevant within different social platforms. Thus, embodied suspicion has a considerable impact on communities, especially when readily and widely shared through technologies like WhatsApp and becomes visualized through use of pictures, dominating local forums and news. The concepts of performance and embodiment also serve to look at relationships and

understandings of ‘community’ critically as they harbour the threat of conceptually unifying harmoniously what is, indeed, opaque.

The body is central in my analysis and interpretation of embodied behavioural patterns and corporeal experiences (Csordas, 1994). In this study, some bodies can be considered more vulnerable than others, depending on whether they are recognised as adequate or inadequate to the space they inhabit and thus worthy or unworthy of substantial forms of recognition (see Butler, 2009 on terms of recognition). I found vulnerability to be expressed through particular bodily strategies of patrolling and surveillance in projecting a brighter and safer future. I not only consider the body to be mindful (in that body and mind are intertwined) but also socially embedded in different ways (both aspects borrowed from Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

Mauss (1936) describes bodily actions as the embodiment of a particular cultural context with varying practices being impacted on by factors such as gender and class. He considers the manner in which people walk or eat to be bodily techniques, as a craft to be learnt, which become adapted depending on different situations. Bourdieu (1990) developed this idea further into the idea of the *habitus*, which are socialised tendencies or norms that guide how people behave and think and can bind people into groups. In the South African context, the vulnerability to crime and the state of *precarity* (Butler, 2008) that it establishes translates into habits and bodily skills. According to Warnier (2007), these skills and habits are also tied to power relationships, the technologies of which diffuse onto bodies and the ways in which people understand their places in the world (their notion of subjectivity). While embodied vulnerabilities may be fragmented and hard to pinpoint, they are revealing when it comes to the making of self, identity and belonging (Van Wolputte, 2004).

In spite of the considerable effects of trauma induced by criminal acts onto bodies and notions of self, research on crime often limits itself to analysing a particular space and its relationship with violent practices. As a result, race and class are often turned into space (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). However, space is, in its first instance, ‘a product of human practice, both material and meaningful; it cannot, in itself, reveal hidden causes – however it may be mapped’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006:26). In engaging with the body itself as a vehicle for communication and inscription, this study hopes to contribute to a body of research geared towards a multi-faceted engagement with crime and violence in South Africa and intends to avoid demonizing or victimizing particular groups of people. It furthermore seeks to understand

how the body is re-positioned or represented in everyday life (see Irving Goffmann, 1978 on the presentation of self in everyday life), how the body moves through the city (see de Certeau, 2000 and Lefebvre, 1991; 1996), and the ways in which social actors “discipline” their bodies (see Foucault, 1977).

2.1. Background and contextualisation

This section aims to put what I have described as deep-seated notions of instability in Observatory in a broader context. Placing the suburb with its particularities into a broader context is necessary in order to emphasise etic impacts on the emic, daily and individually experienced routines and ordinarities. I argue that the historical moment the country finds itself in is essential to keep in mind while interpreting behaviour in any specific context. It shall be used as a frame for interpretation of the ethnographic data that will be provided in the main chapters.

In March 2015 a South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) journalist Vuyo Mvoko and his media crew were robbed lived on national television outside a hospital in the quiet area of Milpark, Johannesburg as they covered a story on the health of the visiting Zambian president. They were robbed of their phones and wallets. Following this incident, a series of news reports by the international media reinforced South Africa’s already notorious image as ‘the crime capital of the world’. As a comment from the SA National Editors’ Forum (*Sanef*) put it, this ‘brings home the level of criminality in our society’¹⁰. The robbers did not seem to be bothered by the presence of the camera and did not try to stay out of the picture. Not only can the numerous news pieces reporting on crime on a daily basis be interpreted as grotesque evidence for the normalized climate of crime in South Africa, but also as imbuing their consumers with a sense of unpredictability and vulnerability. John and Jean Comaroff (2006:29) consider these stories ‘crime tales’ or ‘mundane melodramas whose endless retailing appears to wrest order from chaos’. Even though crime statistics are considered to be deliberately kept low (Lemanski, 2004), they still seem to match the realities created by media reports. More pertinent is the role played by statistics as a medium of communication and daily staple for the media whose fluctuations, according to the Comaroff’s (2006), mark the pulse of national life and can be considered ‘fact-making fiction’ in that they become ‘deeply inscribed in narratives of personal

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31831824>

being' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006:16,10). Circulations of such disproportional and dramatic incidents in the South African context can have a considerable impact on a sense of self.

Police crime statistics from 2014¹¹ show that while the world average for murder is 7.6 per 100 000 people, murder in South Africa is 36.5 per 100 000 people. The year 2014 was the first in 20 years for the number of murders and the murder rates to have increased for a second consecutive year¹². Nationwide, this translates to over 43 people being murdered every day. Contact crimes in the Western Cape have increased by 5% in 2014 from the previous year. Among them are murder (increased by 12.8%) and robbery with aggravating circumstances (increased by 16.3%). In her research on crime in Cape Town Lemanski (2004) finds that, statistically, despite reductions of some crime levels on a national level, one-third of the crimes committed in South Africa are violent, which is more than double the corresponding value in the USA. This indicates the extremity of violence in South Africa, which is considered to have one of the highest crime rates worldwide (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). These numbers, 'fetishized' in the South African context (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006), represent an atmosphere of vulnerability, affecting the people inhabiting the space on various levels. A publication of the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2008 shows that, despite a general decrease of crime numbers on a national level since 1990, 'deep-seated fears about personal and community safety continue to be shared by a sizable contingent of South Africans across the socio-economic and demographic spectrum'¹³. It is this atmosphere that I term 'air of violence' as it constitutes an ever present reality for people in South Africa, reinforced through the 'fact-making fiction' of the media and other institutions, which the Comaroff's (2006) deem to be impactful when it comes to perceptions and being in a space. Steinberg (2001:2) stated, crime and the fear of crime are 'as old as South Africa itself'. What is more, Lemanski (2004:11) considers it 'likely that the media and everyday "talk of crime" are as powerful in perpetuating fear of crime as crime itself'. Even if inhabitants of suburban Cape Town may not always be consciously alert to the risks they are exposed to and may choose to avoid reminders thereof, risks are framed as a particular kind of reality through different media and everyday conversations and can thus be presumed to affect the general public. The impact of a generally perceived vulnerability to crime onto peoples' *corporeality* (Csordas, 1999); their

¹¹ See <http://www.crimestatssa.com/>

¹² See more at: <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-south-africas-official-crime-statistics-for-201314/#sthash.mQgwdBqF.dpuf>

¹³ <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/review/june-2008/age-of-hope>

notion of being in a body and oriented in space, and how they “fix” that body to deal with crime vulnerability is of interest in this study.

With reference to economic impacts, Polanyi (2001) describes vulnerability as an increased threat to human well-being and as reduced mechanisms to cope with these threats. In looking at bodily practices and ‘techniques’ of the body (Mauss, 1934; Warnier, 2007), I understand vulnerability as the perceived exposure to risk, hazards and unpredictability and as a form of embodied trauma. My conceptualisation also encompasses the capability of coping with exposure to violence through the development of strategies as a form of resilience (see for example Obrist, 2006, on living successfully with urban risks).

Looking solely at numbers which have come to dominate analysis of crime, violence is usually represented as an issue of the lower socio-economic classes in South Africa (Seekings, 1996), especially in the light of recent waves of xenophobic attacks in Kwa-Zulu Natal in April 2015. Leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Zulu king’s traditional minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi has located the source of the violent outbursts in a ‘culture of xenophobia’ within which ‘it takes little to spark violence’¹⁴. As Sharp (2008) has observed in the context of similar hunts and killing of foreigners in the Western Cape in 2008, this focus on the lower classes serves as a convenient distraction from structural problems and the role of the wealthy and powerful in solving them. Xenophobia, the fear of ‘the Other’ (Fabian 1990), is not only evident in encounters of foreign nationals and nationals. The presence of ‘others’ in any form or shape in spaces reserved for the privileged, such as the southern suburbs of Cape Town, spark fear and with it, different forms of violence (Lemanski, 2004). Violence is likely to trigger counter-violence in turn (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990), sustaining- and re-composing a climate of suspicion and insecurity. A sense of vulnerability manifests on social and structural levels, absorbing suspicion as well as practices fuelled by it as seemingly necessary mechanisms for survival or well-being.

Even though poor areas such as Nyanga or Manenberg on the outskirts of Cape Town are at the top of the list when it comes to murder in particular, the ‘air of violence’ has a broad reach and South Africa’s population can generally be considered anxious (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). Crime may be unevenly distributed in South Africa. Still being a segregated country, it can be argued that ‘whites and Indians suffer attacks on their property, blacks and coloureds on their person’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). However, the media frequently report on violent crimes

¹⁴ Cape Times, 21.04.15

amongst the privileged. The violent death of the national goal keeper, Senzo Meyiwa, at his secured home in Johannesburg¹⁵ demonstrates that crime and violence are not exclusive to poor areas; as does the stabbing of the Slovakian ambassador's wife when taking a walk at the beach front in Hout Bay on a warm February afternoon¹⁶. A Victim Crime survey in 2014 showed that 75% of all those interviewed believed that crime is mostly motivated by drug related needs and not by 'real' needs. Greed was believed to be the main motivator for crime by 42%. Both, notions of greed and drug abuse are factors that render contact-crime a threat transcending social class and rendering the outcome of it difficult to judge. These associations thus contribute to a sense of general vulnerability to violence whether in poor or privileged neighbourhoods. I am interested in if and how vulnerability to crime is experienced in the suburban middle-class context as a space in which vulnerability is negotiated.

Vulnerability to crime extends from the individual, phenomenologically experienced body to the 'social body' in interaction with others and becomes a regulated object when understood as the 'body politic' (Scheper Hughes & Lock, 1987). Within this context, the three roles of the body - the individual and social body as well as the body politic - impact on one another. Certain bodies become symbolic for crime and, made into such, trigger violent responses. In an attack on a domestic worker in Kenilworth for instance, the perpetrator excused his own crime arguing that he took the woman for a sex worker. The light-skinned 41-year old army committed member of the "security committee" of the suburb explained later that this was because she was walking in a district where sex is known to be offered in exchange for money¹⁷. After throwing the woman repeatedly to the ground, the man from the southern suburbs moved away, just to turn around and shout at someone who came to the woman's aid that she was a 'criminal'¹⁸. The middle-aged, dark-skinned woman and grandmother of three who was on her way from her home in the local township Khayelitsha to a cleaning job in the suburb. The individual, phenomenological and violent experience of the attacked became symbolic in discussions around regulations of sex work and the violations associated with it. The story also reveals how particular bodies become profiled and symbolic of crime with this social fingerprinting and ideological segregation of bodies remaining largely based on racial markers and notions of spaces that are cultivated in certain ways.

¹⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/26/south-africa-goalkeeper-senzo-meyiwa-dead>

¹⁶ <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Ambassadors-wife-recovering-after-stabbing-in-Hout-Bay-20150224>

¹⁷ <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/he-came-up-to-me-and-just-klapped-me-1767030>

¹⁸ <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/I-thought-she-was-a-prostitute-20141018>

In April 2015, photographs taken of a man named Emmanuel Sithole being stabbed in the chest in the township Alexandra of Johannesburg¹⁹ caught international attention as they became visual symbol for violent attacks on foreigners. The severity of violence is judged in context-specific manners. The judge in the Oscar Pistorius trial decided in his favour and kept his punishment low as he was defending the shooting of his girlfriend by claiming he mistook her for a burglar²⁰. Pistorius testified that he suddenly felt "a sense of terror rushing over me" – triggered by a noise from the bathroom²¹. While this may be a reasonable line of juristic defence in the South African context and shooting at a person as an understandable response to fear; I imagine the same justification to be met with a lack of understanding, for instance in a European context in which crime is on the increase²² but much less part of 'the public mind' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006:16). In the case of Pistorius, the fear of any form of 'other' penetrating what has been constructed as 'proper', 'ordinary' and 'safe' did not only serve as an explanation for the crime committed but the low penalty also impacts on societal regulations in re-defining what constitutes a crime when compared to another as it can be used by lawyers in the future as reference. In all the cases mentioned, the rush and even fatal responses to moments of being suspicious and feeling threatened are of a specific quality in Cape Town. There appears to be a sometimes violent underlying current moving under the regular state of affairs. This undercurrent is triggered by a fear of crime, substantially linked to perceptions bodies being under siege by particularly conceptualised 'others' and having to defend themselves. The victim, persistently referred to as a 'model' in the news about the fatal shooting was internationally considered tragic and memorable: Pistorius's cultivation of a masculinity that involves the use of guns and performed violence opened up questions about a problematic embodiment of criminal fear and social comfort in the South African context.

Vulnerability and insecurity can manifest in different ways – symbolically through fences and private security, more subtly through everyday encounters and relationships and find their expression in various practices. According to Bannister and Fyfe (2001), the fear of crime is a more widespread phenomenon than crime itself but at least as damaging to the social and political fabric of cities. What constitutes violence, McKendrick and Hoffmann (1990) emphasize, is always a social construction and the line between what are socially acceptable scenarios of violence and illegitimate violence is thin. If violence is defined as being structurally

¹⁹ <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Newsmaker-Emmanuel-Sithole-A-life-over-R250-20150429>

²⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/21/oscar-pistorius-trial-full-story-reeva-steenkamp>

²¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2013/feb/19/oscar-pistorius-trial-reeva-steenkamp>

²² violent criminality increased by 22% between 1997-2001 in Europe (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006)

implemented (see Farmer, 1996 on structural violence) and as comprising not only physical but also mental and emotional damage (Walter, 1996), it becomes debatable which violence is greater- the building of fences to keep a particular group of people out of a particular space or the breaking through the fences, erected as social barriers. Whether it is an armed robbery or any form of 'armed response' (the name of a locally popular private security company), the body and pain are significantly central to private forms of punishment (Caldeira, 2000) of any kind.

High levels of fear and notions of insecurity cannot always be adequately explained by measures of exposure to risk. In the formerly, by law, 'white' suburbs (which remain largely this way) people are less likely to become victims to crime than in other areas and most felonies have been on a downward spiral since 1990 (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). However, there appears to be an inverse relationship between fear and crime (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). According to Killias (1990), vulnerability can thus be considered a key variable behind the observed distribution of fear of crime with physical, social, and situational factors of vulnerability being of great relevance. Levels of crime in different spaces in South Africa and their visibility render an interrogation of the ways in which vulnerabilities translate onto actual practices an interesting, but neglected, focal point for social scientists. As McKendrick and Hoffmann (1990) have established in the South African context, violence can injure and destroy, restrict lifestyles, evoke fear, damage relationships, dehumanize, alienate, cause psychological disruption and lead to moral atrophy. This ethnography focuses on the impact of the vulnerability to crime in suburban Cape Town onto social practices and relationships, as seen through the body. Where the physical well-being of a person can only be insufficiently secured by societal structures, people live in *precarity* (Butler, 2008). In the particular context of Cape Town, the dependency on others (*precariousness*) and *precarity* (Butler, 2008) manifest in various ways. Creating stability by establishing relationships while simultaneously maintaining social boundaries can be important mechanisms in dealing with distortion and the fear of crime. The spatial organisation and segregation that comes with it are also linked to recent indications that 'Africa is coming to the Cape' (Lemanski, 2004, Nyamnjoh 2006, Sharp 2008), adding to a mass of African bodies, from outside of South Africa, considered poor that continue to be strategically kept out of the city (Lemanski, 2004). While vulnerability in the South African context is thematised on a regular basis (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006), its experiential aftermath is not. This research aims to fill said epistemological gap.

South Africa generally is thought of as being characterised by a high degree of fatal violence (Steinberg 2001). Before and during the world cup 2010, South Africa was globally framed as the crime capital of the world. In the UK, ‘stab vests’ were designed in order to allow tourists to follow the soccer spectacle on the ground without a potential attack on them having to be lethal²³. Crime is thought of not as organised but rather as the spontaneous recognition of an opportunity or outburst of violent tendencies with the perpetrator being unstable, irrational and lacking human characteristics. Brutal rape cases and killings reported in the news enhance the notion that crime in South Africa is linked to a disrespect for human life and townships are often viewed as breeding grounds for violence and lawlessness (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006; Seekings, 1996). These reports can be considered archived memories, causing particular kinds of cultural identities to become reproduced (Appadurai 2003). The suburban space is conceptualized as inherently different from a surrounding sea of unpredictability in that it is supposedly contained, safe and isolated. Hence, there is an anxiety to maintain suburbs as idyllic islands of harmony. The rougher the sea is observed and reported to be, the greater the anxieties to protect the space inhabited.

In suburban Cape Town where the vast majority of homes are secured by bars, barbed wires, alarm systems or are guarded by dogs and private security personnel, the fear of not being able to hold onto things and the effort to protect one’s well-being leap to the eye - especially the eye of someone unfamiliar with these highly visible measures for ‘security’ and ‘safety’. The practice of fencing and arming somewhat contradicts ideas of suburbia as a place characterised by peace, predictability and, perhaps, even dullness. What is at risk are not merely material objects. As the Oscar Pistorius trial implicated, a sense of ‘security’ in South Africa is also tied to ideas of personhood. Being able to protect oneself is particularly tied to notions of vulnerable masculinities and gendered ideas of power and weakness constitute an everyday concern for many South Africans (see for examples Gutmann, 1997; Morell, 2001; Seale. 2009). Women are often seen as potential victims of crime and thus find themselves forced to develop mechanisms in order to counter-act their victimisation and thus inherent vulnerability (see for examples see Holst, 1995; Salo 2013). Fears of crime are complex and take partial root in the prevailing economic and spatial segregation of the Cape Townian population, which continue

²³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8465195.stm>

to coincide with racial classifications²⁴. (One of the first questions the police officers asked me after a break-in at my home was if the intruder had been ‘coloured’²⁵. An estimated 90% of the mug shots I looked at happened to be of people who would, in the South African context, generally be categorised as such.)

Living in suburban, middle class Cape Town it is, difficult to escape the deeply seated fears of becoming a victim to violence and material loss. As a social crisis, crime tends to be linked to a lack of economic and social prospects. The identified lack is, in turn, linked to South Africa’s history of segregation of groups of people on various levels²⁶, wrapped in a racist rhetoric (see for example Glaser, 2000, on youth gangs in Soweto). Fears of ‘the Other’ resulting from practices of segregation offer fertile soil for insecurities and a sense of vulnerability to thrive upon. Increasing visibilities of crime in previously protected areas and the increased media coverage has fuelled public anxieties with regards to crime and often lead to the fortification of Cape Town’s suburbs (Lemanski, 2004). Those anxieties tend to be presented as inevitable consequences of the politics of segregation and fear of the past but are seldom looked at as contemporary and extraordinary phenomena. Anxieties also become fuelled as part of a political repertoire. For instance, reports on developing movements supported by the political party Economic Freedom Front (EFF) that aim, as the party explains, to occupy not only unclaimed but also inhabited space in wealthy areas by masses of ‘outsiders’ are meant to highlight a particular kind of vulnerability, intertwined with the fear of violence. What Agbola (1997) has termed the ‘architecture of fear’ and segregation of public space is based on physical markers of difference, often essentially based on skin tone and features tied to racial categories and stereotypes. The ‘architecture of fear’ encompasses the ways in which contemporary landscapes in cities are shaped by society’s preoccupation with fear and how this becomes apparent in home design, security systems and gated communities, amongst other things. The ‘air of violence’ as an analytical tool incorporates the notion that fears can present themselves in material form, but extends this concept in understanding fear as a less tangible quality. This quality or ‘air’ becomes materiality in different ways but it is the impact of embodied practice that is of particular interest of this research. Its effects manifest themselves deeply on an individual, social and institutional level and contradict any post-apartheid-rainbow-nation scenario. The

²⁴ With the colonialization of South Africa and the implementation of strictly racially segregating Apartheid laws the following categories were established, ripened and propagated: ‘Black’ (dark-skinned); ‘Coloured’ (racially mixed) and ‘White’ (light-skinned or Caucasian).

²⁵ One of the racial categories of Apartheid that are still in use today.

²⁶ Reference to the Group Areas Act (Act No. 41 of 1950) controlling the occupation and acquisition of land and property and premises

economy of security and its infrastructure play an integral part in the distribution of fear in Cape Town. As the state's monopoly of policing gets broken, patterns of segregation and class differences deepen as there is a need to maintain the market and differentiate between different types of bodies – those who have to be protected on the one hand and those who constitute a threat to the well-being of the former on the other.

The root of the 'evil' is often ideologically located within the layer of the metropolis that has been disconnected from the general fabric of the city (Rodgers, 2004), the outer layer that consist of the so called 'townships'. The evil in its imagined physical form is also gendered (male), often young and racialized (usually as 'black' or 'coloured'). Crime in the South African context is thus stereotyped. As Caldeira (2000:91) states, in the context of Sao Paolo, young men in the city are considered 'easy targets for the forces of evil'. The imagined body penetrated by the evil is also poor, as poor bodies are seen to be closer to necessity and nature rather than rational behaviour and reason (Caldeira, 2000). They are also physically closer to spaces associated with crime. It is usually institutions that are rendered responsible in controlling these bodies. If those institutions seemingly fail in so doing, barriers are built and all types of private control established (Caldeira, 2000). Fortified houses constitute the aesthetical norm in the suburbs while private security companies are meant to keep an eye on those who look 'suspicious'. Some bodies are recognized as inadequate to the suburban space. When I was robbed at my home, the police brought a random man in his 30s back to my house in the back of the police van. The man looked beaten by life and simply happened to be around. His poorly maintained body was not merely identified as not belonging in the suburban space, but also instantly categorized as potentially dangerous and violent. Notions of public space accessible to everyone was thus discarded and his 'right' to a certain 'part of the city' (Darcy & Rogers, 2014) was suddenly denied based on a wild suspicion that made it possible to render this man less of a citizen (see Allison, 2012; Butler, 2008; Biehl, 2007; Standing, 2011; Stewart, 2012) or 'ex-human' (Biehl, 2007). This presents a good example of how guardians of the law distribute further *precarity* (Butler, 2008) instead of creating order or offering security. In their state of *precarity* (Butler, 2008), certain bodies in the suburban space thus become criminalised as they are recognised as unworthy of owning the full status of a human being. They can thus be seen to suffer a form of 'public death' (Biehl, 2007).

Observatory offers a particularly interesting space for doing research on the fear of crime and loss, and the bodily practices developed to deal with it. Having worked for the local newspaper

I came to understand that the discourse of crime is a constant and predominant one when it comes to thinking about the quality of living in this suburb – also often described as bohemian and diverse. Supposedly a space for everyone, it essentially offers and attempts to guard a space for what Caldeira (2000) has called *fortified enclaves*, walled and private spaces inhabited by the middle- and upper classes. Its ideological in-betweenness is also reflected in its geographic location. Situated between Salt River, a poorer suburb with a thriving drug trade, and suburb like Mowbray, Rosebank and Rondebosch, which are predominantly occupied by students and well-off families, Observatory struggles to police its borders and maintain its image of a suburb that transcends apart-ness within the urban sphere. One of the last editions of the monthly paper *Obslife* (February 2015) contained several articles and letters of readers anxious about the levels of security after several break-ins and related stabbings within a short period of time. These concerns are often linked back to the investment in private security companies, which are employed in the area as an addition to the regular police controls by the Woodstock police station²⁷ (frequently criticised for being dysfunctional; see Gillespie [2007; 2008]). While those discourses are channelled by few they will affect many in one way or another. As private security patrols are not considered to be successful in reducing crime in the suburb, the Observatory Neighbourhood Watch became revived after three years of inactivity. At the start of my fieldwork, the local initiative and response to crime had been active for a few weeks only and encompassed roughly 10% of the population. The members are well interconnected through social media such as Google groups and WhatsApp chat groups through which crime is recorded and reported on a sub-community level. At these beginning stages of the group, discussions the possibility of carrying licensed firearms when patrolling the suburb were surfacing. In an empirical study, Brunton-Smith and Sturgis (2011) have found that neighbourhood structural characteristics, visual signs of disorder, and recorded crime have direct and independent effects on individual-level fear of crime. The increase of security measures in Observatory can thus be presumed to impact on an individual's sense of vulnerability, and thus on how bodies are deployed against it. WhatsApp - and Google chat groups also create an alchemy of numbers that translate onto everyday discourse. In this context, narratives of 'lawlessness might console, enthrall, indict; especially among those who take personal safety as a right and have property to protect' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). This study's focus is not just on these numbers, but on the ways in which fear of these numbers and

²⁷ The Woodstock police station is located between Salt River (Observatory's low-income neighbouring suburb) and Town – the final urban destination with the string of suburbs more-or-less quietly and peacefully leading up to it.

statistics, and in particular the insecurity that has come to define daily life in Observatory, is confronted through “bodily techniques” (Mauss, 1936; Warnier, 2007, Foucault, 1988).

2.2. Reading crime and vulnerability in South Africa

On the subject of violence, Lee and Stanko (2014) challenge researchers by asking if something so pervasive can remain so elusive to research. Social studies and anthropology in particular have been mainly concerned with finding explanations for crime and violence and its distribution (Gillespie, 2014); with policing (Hornberger, 2014; Jensen, 2014) and the penalization of crime (Lynch, 2015; Gillespie, 2008) or with the people who commit crime themselves (see for example Radebe, 2014; Glaser, 2000). While coping with crime has been of interest in fields like psychology, it has not been exhaustively tended to within the discipline of anthropology. I consider the ‘air of violence’ described thus far to be a form of brutality. Revived on a daily basis, this brutality becomes collective trauma in South Africa and distributes a general sense of vulnerability. Vulnerability as embodied trauma and a form of structural violence should not remain as systematically unexplored, as Lee and Stanko (2014) argue violence in general to be.

Boers (1991) developed a model to systematically and interactively analyse the fear of crime and considers two different cognitive processes of judging a situation: the personal evaluation of the risk and of one’s personal abilities to cope with the evaluated situation. Those evaluations, he states, may be linked to emotions of fear and anxiety that impact on body and mind. Similarly, to the constant sickness that the women of Xe’caj are described as experiencing due to a constant exposure to violence (Green 1994), vulnerabilities in Cape Town can also be seen as rupturing the connections between body, mind and spirit as they manifest in physical as well as psychological ways. In the same way that the women’s illnesses find expression in social relations ‘between the individual, social, and body politic’ – the fear of crime becomes a ‘way of life’ in the same respects as it manifests on various levels, rendering everyday security strategies ordinary. As they become routinized and thus habitualised (Bourdieu, 1990), practices do not only become expressions of a way of thinking but serve to maintain particular social structures.

According to Lemanski (2004) the fear of crime is linked to the fear of ‘Other’ as much as it is expression of powerlessness due to a loss of control over territory and urban order. The socio-

spatial segregation in Cape Town and an unequal ability to protect, she argues, appears remarkably similar to urban apartheid and its social consequences are the same: ‘As those with wealth have blockaded themselves in, their fear of the increasingly unknown outside has exploded, leading to further fortification and, hence, deeper fear’ (Lemanski, 2004:6). While it might not be the *swaart gevaar* (Afrikaans for ‘black danger’) that is propagated in order to encourage the practice of fencing oneself in and others out, moral panics of apocalyptic proportions justify the building of enclaves. Such are characterized by ‘physical separation (walls, gates), symbolic exclusion (perceptions of undesirables), private security (armed guards, electronic surveillance), inward-facing self-containment and (artificial) social homogeneity’. However, as Lemanski (2004) shows, research in America and South Africa disputes suggestions that gated or monitored communities lead to decreased crime and increased community but rather indicates that the erecting of walls and other boundaries in fact facilitate social exclusion. Not only does the practice of fencing constitute an ‘architecture of fear’ Agbola (1997) but it can also be presumed to impact onto social practice and notions of being in this particular suburban space.

Gillespie (2014) suggests that murder rates should be the ‘starting point of accounting for the distribution of violence across the whole city [...]’. This research will take a general awareness of crime (real or manufactured through ‘mythostats’ [Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006]) as a starting point for its interrogations as it considers this awareness to be a form of violence, penetrating everyday routines. Studies of crime have thus far focused on statistics and the exploring of reasons and explanations for crime prevalence. This research aims to shift the focus from the potential sources of crime to the everyday engagement with its perceived presence, manifesting through bodily practice. Linking practices to individual life histories will help understand the detrimental effects that fear of criminal violence has on the quality of life at an individual, community and societal level.

Chapter 3 – Inserting the self in the field: How to ‘do’ research on vulnerability and ethnographic methods as ethics

Abstract:

Researching vulnerability and the fear of a violent intrusion into the everyday is a difficult task and forming its findings into an ethnographic story is a dangerous one. In the following chapter I grapple with questions of what it means to insert oneself within a space as a researcher and look at the politics of self that are involved in the process of becoming a part of it in some ways. In so doing, I look at methodology as ethics and dissect what ‘doing research’ and ‘doing ethics’ might mean. I also discuss the implications of having used my body in this space to research bodies, looking for other bodies and the various ethical challenges that come with the process of becoming a corporeal part of my own research.

3.1. Introduction:

I conducted my fieldwork in Observatory over a period of 10 months. After establishing networks and relationships in the field I had a number of people contributing to my research with valuable information about the topic of coping with crime. A strong core of main informants were, however, ONW members who I mainly connected with in patrolling together but also at the monthly meetings of the group. Richard, Christina and John were always available to guide me through my research and update me on happenings in the suburb and in their lives. However, I approached and informally interviewed many other people in Observatory and adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Anthropology Southern Africa (ASA). I protected my informants by using pseudonyms and being keeping sensitive information as discreet as possible in the suburb. When picking up that people are not keen to share personal information, I let conversation be stirred into seemingly more comfortable domains for the individuals and did not press for information when People were clearly not interested in engaging with me at all. I also refrained of making use of the database I had access to as a member of the ONW (numbers and email addresses) as I would have found it inappropriate to contact self-chosen non-patrollers. What is more, I reciprocated in different ways whenever I saw a chance to do so, whether it was through lending my ear for stories urging to be told or bringing chocolate or cake for meetings over coffee with Christina or Richard. I found

participant observation and ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) to be useful in helping me to avoid reducing my informants to what they are anxious about, as the anticipation of crime is far from the only aspect impacting on their lives. These are methods that may be considered standard in anthropology and essential to mention in any research proposal. ‘Participant observation’ as an ethnographic research method and, introduced by Malinowski (1922), involves living amongst the ‘natives’ and obtaining their point of view (as opposed to practicing ‘armchair anthropology’). This is only possible to degrees and relies on a radical separation between ‘home’ and ‘the field’ when these distinctions are in reality often blurry. ‘Thick descriptions’ are a form of note-taking during the research and presenting research findings in a form of writing that is accessible to the reader and aims to avoid projecting one’s views as a researcher onto the reader. Avoiding this, as well, a matter of degree as the researcher and writer does induce certain lines of thinking the reader will struggle to completely free him- or herself from. I consider participant observation and thick description to be more than a formality and an approach in collecting data. Taking part in my informants’ lives - collecting the observations made and putting them into words had an impact on my sense of self and my ways of seeing things around me. In order to gain a deep insight into peoples’ everyday lives, relationships were spun – some more and some less intimately, helping me to become a cultural ‘insider’ in an organization unfamiliar to me until the start of the research and to gain an emic perspective. Most certainly, long term contact, proximity and gaining acceptance as a researcher (Bernard, 1998) were essential in the creation and maintenance of these relationships. This included physical proximity (of living in the field) as well as proximity through communication technologies, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, with the former having played a particularly important role in the setting up of meetings and interviews. As Geertz (1973) suggested, I aimed to represent the cultural context of my research as text and as symbol upon which my and the reader’s analysis will be based. My own and my participants’ bodies were the canvas from a particular local cultural composition or text which was read and interpreted in my role as a researcher. In the following section, I describe my engagements in the field, their ethical implications and my ways of encountering and processing them, largely by thinking about what it means to ‘do’ ethnography.

Observatory, my home

I have been a resident in Observatory for most of the time that I have been in Cape Town - that being the last five years. It is also the first place I knew upon arriving in South Africa for an internship at the local newspaper in 2010. The place is thus part of me and I am part of it. ‘Doing

ethnography', 'doing ethics' and making sense of 'the Other' thus also means making sense of myself in this context. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) have criticized the fetishizing of 'the field' and blurred the subject-object divisions involved in it. What constitutes 'the field', they argue, has to be reconsidered as it was (as well as the anthropologist as an expert on a particular and distant 'culture') historically constructed. However, no research 'field' is a closed and isolated entity with an entrance and exit, particularly in the context of a globalizing world, where the hegemonic separation between 'the field' and 'home' (promoting the construction of an inherently different 'other') has to be rethought. As argued by John and Jean Comaroff (1999), meaning-making is always a process of negotiation and contestation between the local and the global. In making sense of the life worlds of the ones 'we' (as anthropologists) study, our own assumptions have to be questioned and our familiar notions have to be de-familiarised (see Okazaki, 2003).

For me, 'doing' fieldwork in what I consider to be my home was an advantage. In challenging the familiar and reflecting on not-too-distant memory of how I learnt to be in this space and acquiring my social and cultural competences in this context, I learned more about my surroundings as well as myself in relationship to them. For me, the process of learning cultural intimacy in this context is rather recent (see Collins and Gallinat 2010), as are my memories of them shifting over time (see Clifford, 1986). At the same time, I have another 'home' in Germany and experiences through travelling (as most people these days) that I can also draw on for purposes of careful cultural comparison. This ethnography can thus also be considered somewhat multi-sited - as including different perspectives and combining an 'insider' and 'outsider' point-of-view.

Reflexivity

Conducting research on crime and its perceived presence in Observatory was challenging in different ways. I experienced the constant exposure to peoples' fears and traumata over the months as sometimes straining. I was grateful to, halfway through my fieldwork, find out that the ONW WhatsApp group, a persistent and steady reminder of such fears and traumata, can be muted. Now that my time in the field as a researcher has ended and my lease in Observatory is expiring, I am looking at the prospect of moving to another suburb or into the city centre to be a relief from the inner tensions I have subconsciously built up. As a person who tends to identify with other peoples' issues, I am convinced that a break with 'the field' and the data

collection process is called for in my case. However, I still have strong ties to the field – friendships and intense memories. There will thus never be a clear break with my research context for me. Complex for me was furthermore the circumstance that Observatory was also the field for my Honours dissertation topic. When I was exploring the daily lives of foreign male sex workers through an NGO in the area called SWEAT (Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce), I ended up spending most of my time in outside spaces like parks in the suburb and its surroundings. Most of the men were homeless and bridged their daily lives by finding ways of ‘making due’. Judging from my experience in the ONW, all of the men I worked with would be likely to be considered ‘dodgy’ and suspicious. I had an experience when I was patrolling with Richard, who was emphasising his no-nonsense-policy by addressing people he envisaged as suspicious. After a while of scanning the neighbourhood in this manner I recognised a man I had seen at SWEAT before without ever having properly introduced ourselves. I got tense and started talking to capture Richard’s attention and prevent him from confronting the man and exposing me as treacherously ‘working for the other side’ – which is how I felt in this moment. Apart from the tapestries of the topic of fearing crime itself, a lack of emotional distance from my topic and of choice and, at times, from my informants as well as from the field I studied thus presented themselves as sometimes difficult to manoeuvre. I found the routine of sitting down and typing my field notes to be very helpful in acquiring a more distanced view.

Telling stories

Essentially, ‘doing’ ethnography is creating fiction or, as Clifford (1986) stated, ‘partial truths’. Stories of people in a particular cultural context are constructed, based on what can be observed and what can be told. How and what can be taken from observations and interviews can be considered a fabrication of realities. These ethnographic fabrications themselves are based on fabricated cultural realities. In the context of my research, for example, particular notions of a ‘suspect’ were cultivated and became part of embodied behaviour in Observatory, impacting on relationships and spatial realities. What is more, I found selves in the role of the ‘patroller’ to be reconstructed. The problem lies not in ethnography not fitting an easy and binary category of being either ‘scientific’ or ‘fictitious’. The danger lies in telling ‘a single story’, as novelist Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has put it so eloquently²⁸. There may be a violence eminent in the

²⁸ https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

constructing of a person in any form. However, telling multiple stories and giving more than one simplifying voice to a person makes it apparent that ‘our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories’ (Adichie, 2009). Translating culture (see Asad, 1986) is not an easy task. Reading and re-inscribing meanings are, as I have sought to point out, subjective and potentially dangerous in their capacity to reduce or misrepresent. I have grappled with this throughout my writing and have attempted to show different facets of the individuals worked with. When introduced, the descriptions of characters seem categorical, simple and do not do justice to the colourfulness of individual experience. In extending these ‘simple’ understandings of people in the suburb as patrollers throughout the dissertation, I have attempted to offer a view beyond the potentially confining written word.

The power of ethnography

Clifford (1988) has put into question what he considers an ‘automatic authority’ when writing about ‘others’. The process of writing was historically considered separate from the work in the field, implying the emotional distance and dissociation with the field, essentially reinforcing the authority of the ethnographer. While this is hardly possible even when the ‘field’ and ‘home’ are geographically disconnected, it is much less so in my context. I am at the very moment of writing this still very much emotionally invested in ‘my field’ – not merely because I am still here and I consider it my home, but, more importantly, because the stories and experiences shared with me have become a part of myself. I believe that the stories I shared and the time I spent listening and accompanying will also leave their marks in some way because, to stress this again, fieldwork is not a liminal activity. I must acknowledge the power inherent in writing down my ‘knowledge’ of the subject in a scholarly fashion. Arguably, the written word will last longer than memories and has a wider impact. I felt this though resting heavily on me in the process of writing. I thus wrote this account with much care and great appreciation for the opportunity (as it is not only a burden) to offer a glimpse into human life worlds that may be helpful in understanding particular phenomena such as the fear of crime a little better in other contexts.

During my fieldwork, I found myself often feeling powerless, particularly at the beginning and during the difficult process of finding people in the suburb who saw the benefit of socialising with me over a long time period and sharing their very own stories. After I made some friends in the field, others who remained sceptic towards me began to tolerate my persistent appearance

at meetings and bigger patrols. Most did not seem to mind from the beginning but others had to get use to the idea of having a researcher around as a witness. I felt dependent on people in the suburb during this time, which I consider to be a good thing. It does not only diffuse the often taken-for-granted power that is often inserted in the collecting of information on behalf of an ethnographer but it also made me appreciate the trust in me as a person and judge of how to use this information greatly and constantly. As Gupta and Ferguson (1997) state, I see place, identity and power as the constant process of negotiation. The location from which anthropological knowledge is constructed does not always remain the same and involves more capacities as the simple notion of the powerful ethnographer reveals. However, at the end of the day, the task to attach identities to subjects is mine and mine alone.

Being a woman who was considered young by my participants (I am 27 years old) and being from Germany were facets of my positionality in the field that I, overall, experienced as advantageous. I think that my being foreign and a young woman rendered the questions that sometimes came across as unnecessary forgivable. I was thought of as someone who can be taught and even the question of ‘who is suspicious’ would be attempted to be answered on behalf of my informants, even though most of the ONW patrollers seemed to think that this was a rather silly question - and yet they found answers difficult to phrase. It should also be said that the fact that some of my informants turned out to be very supportive and keen to teach me sometimes seemed to attract inquisitive looks in the neighbourhood. I became accepted as a researcher in this context and my presence was tolerated, even though the benefits of my being there appeared to sometimes be questioned. Allan, who will be introduced shortly and who holds a position of power in the suburb, appeared a little disconcerted when I started coming to his office frequently and having long conversations with his subordinate Richard, even though he expressed my being welcome there before. There were what I would describe as ‘normal’ tensions of this kind which, however, did not prevail or appear dominate throughout the fieldwork.

Becoming part of the field and negotiating roles within it

With the challenging of terms in anthropology such as ‘objectivity’, ‘neutral observer’ and ‘science’ with terms like ‘poetics’, ‘play’ and ‘process’ deriving their meaning in opposition to them, the performative turn in anthropology, as Conquergood (1989) argued, has led to an

objection of ideals of value-free and giving ways to understanding societies and selves and constructed and reconstructed.

What is more, human realities are fabricated, invented and imagined and cultures are made or even ‘made up’. I sometimes felt, more or less, like part or WON but the intimacy of some relationships that unfolded made it difficult for me to remove myself emotionally from the field. My whole body became a part of the stories shared with me during patrols, meetings and get-togethers and part of the strategizing in combatting vulnerability. Reading the long threads of the WhatsApp chat groups and being forced to imagine ‘suspects’ day in and day out made this notion even more dominant. On the other hand, the descriptive messages were constant reminders that I am part of the profiling and confining of bodies in the neighbourhood as both, a researcher and a member of the organisation. As other bodies in the organisation, I had to negotiate my personal needs, objectives and comfort zones in the getting together with other members. I also had to continuously re-establish my position as a researcher. While most of the people that became a part of the research in one way or another repeatedly asked me how my research was going, the intimacy of some relationships made a clear disentangling of interests and needs impossible.

As an ethnographer, I was interrogating how performance in the suburb reproduces, legitimates, upholds, challenges and critiques or subverts ideologies (Conquergood, 1989). Having become a somewhat ambiguous performer myself, I used the time I took to type out my notes and fabricating this dissertation to reflect on my being part of constructed realities but also being in the position to question them –as most people I met did in different manners. Performance is a site of struggle where competing interests intersect and different viewpoints get articulated (Conquergood, 1989). My roles as a friend, researcher and patroller shifted in dominance, as did the roles of my informants. Even though we shared stories with each other and started to trust one another other quite well, stories that served to construct themselves in particular ways as patrollers of the neighbourhood surfaced frequently with my main informants (as will become evident later on). The aspect of performance was thus not only used as an analytical tool in this dissertation, but also considered part of the process of collecting data and being in the field.

Patrolling as a research method and way of embodying suspicion

Deciding to render the fear of crime the focus of my study was easy, as it is an aspect of the city that has interested me from the moment I arrived in Cape Town, specifically from the moment that I had to unlock a security gate and lock myself into a building designed to be a human cage, supposedly to make me feel ‘safe’. Having lived in Cape Town for five years, I got somewhat used to the practice of living behind bars, if not the idea. News stories and conversations with people about different crime incidents have put the constantly hovering danger of becoming a victim to crime on my sensory and embodied map of living in the southern suburbs of Cape Town – ironically one of the safest places in Cape Town with regards to violent crimes. Albeit, one traumatizing incident, in addition to ever present fear-provoking stories, can have a deep impact on one’s embodied behaviour in the context of an atmosphere of uncertainty. An embodiment of suspicion will also impact on ways of engaging with one’s environment and the people inhabiting it. It was such an incident (followed by a few other ones that I considered to be ‘smaller’) that made me realise that my way of moving about had changed through an actual anticipation of my comfort of feeling safe and ability to inhabit a space without the worry of being approached in a negative way or being disturbed at any given moment.

Nevertheless, upon accepting the idea of centring my research on the ONW, I immediately felt the urge to distinguish myself from this group of people who go out and look for ‘suspicious’ people. I remember declaring the act of actively searching for crime and potential criminals to be ‘a little absurd’ in a conversation with my supervisor before I started networking and before my first patrol in the streets of quaint and busy Observatory. My first patrol made the idea of patrolling as a coping mechanism to a constant exposure to the idea of crime, interfering with the routines and extraordinary aspects of the everyday, accessible to me. Walking the neighbourhood with my informants also made it clear that patrolling is a rather complex social process in which individual needs and group dynamics have to be reconciled. As a performance, patrolling involves the cultivation of the persona of a patroller, as well as the fabrication, invention, imagination and construction of the human realities around them. Patrolling as an act and strategy is not only central in being someone watching the suburb – as becomes clear in discussions within the ONW meetings as well as in the *Obsid* meetings. It also became key in my researching an embodiment of ‘suspicion’ in Observatory. As part of the process of ‘walking and talking’ I believe to have collected data that sit-down interviews could not have generated. In walking the streets of Observatory, a perceived ‘air of violence’ is addressed, processed and rather actively challenged – as was my illusion that I have a uniquely reflective and rational approach in coping with my own fears and trauma. I consider the process of

walking, talking, watching and reporting to be ways of dealing with uncertainties and insecurities. This poses the question of how precisely coping with uncertainty becomes embodied practice and of what is to be found on the opposite end of this form of personal empowerment: the idea of a ‘suspect’.

Contextualizing through Participant Observation

The patrols offered one way for me to participate and observe the routines of people who render the watching and re-mapping of the neighbourhood (in terms of crime and other ‘unusual’ activities) part of their routines. When walking with just one or two other people, usually my main informants Christina and Richard, rather intimate conversation about life, relationships, fears and loneliness would evolve. The routine of walking, watching others, observing and conversing created a relaxed atmosphere and offered me insights that formal interviews might not have done. The bigger groups, organised by Luke, are less intimate and Luke in particular does not share much about his personal life. The conversations focused around how the NW could be improved, how more people can be motivated to patrol, the role of the various social forums in Observatory and the effectiveness of the police, particularly of Constable Brett Berry, responsible for operations in Observatory (from the Woodstock police station nearby). At the same time the ONW environment? is a place to socialise, especially for Amber, who lives by herself and, as a woman, she says she finds the NW patrols to be a good way of meeting and getting to know people living around you. The meetings offered a good opportunity for me to observe vivid discussions as more people (non-patrollers, even non-members with an interest in crime developments take part) are present in the local Community Centre. The fact that people who have different roles in the community are present, these discussions offer a good insight into conflicting opinions and approaches when it comes coping with insecurities. Present and contributing are police constables, the local security manager as well as the operations director of the *Obsid*, the editor of the local newspaper *Obslife*, the head of the Observatory Civic Association (*OCA*) and the head patrollers of the four active sectors excluding the industrial area (see appendix).

More formal meetings like the ones of the local security council, discussing an improvement of security strategies in Observatory, offered another way for me to observe and experience what concerns particular people who are (and some of them have been for a long time) key in impacting on changes and initiatives that aim to render Observatory a safer space. This was

very important in the process of collecting data as it helped me understand the kinds of information that reaches different people through different channels and who is involved in the decision-making when it comes to deciding what is good for the neighbourhood.

Getting a grip of the grittiness of the everyday: semi-structured interviews and life histories

Informal interviews with many different individuals on living and being in Observatory contributed to my set of quantitative data. Unsurprisingly, most of them had been exposed to some form of crime, affecting them more or less drastically according to them. Surprisingly, although many of those instances had happened here in Observatory, they did not associate this particular place with crime but rather saw the need to develop strategies of security depending on the specific space one is inhabiting. This alerted me to the circumstance that I, a foreigner who has spent most of her five years living in Cape Town in Observatory, link my experiences of crime by association closely to this particular place. Though I am aware that the less violent crimes manifest locally due to the socio-economic and geographic specifics of Observatory, it is a place where something happened to me in the past and where something might happen in the future. Thus, life histories of various people helped me keep Cape Town and South Africa as a broader context in mind and focally break away from my own personal misery. Stories of moving to live in different communities and drastic (and not necessarily crime -related) ruptures in life generally helped me to understand the embodied strategies of coping with crime as a rather pragmatic (if not always conscious) result from one amongst many more-or-less traumatic experiences.

Analysing data from the *WhatsApp* and *Google* chat groups, Facebook and newspapers

Only about 10% of the members of the NW go out and patrol and physically patrol the local streets. Some might do the watching and reporting from their living room windows; others may observe their surroundings closely on their way to the supermarket. Most of the complaints that are posted in the Google Group and on Facebook are posted by people who do not take part in the patrol walks. They do, however, constitute a further channel of information that contributes to the shaping of a particular reality that has to be engaged with by each individual in their own ways. I thus consider these groups to be valuable sources of data and engaged with their content. Though I could not detail all of the numerous topics, the recurrent ones are featured in this

dissertation and informed my understanding of what is considered relevant and worth discussing for the members of the groups. Most interestingly, members would use the Google Groups as a forum of discussion and often used the opportunity of a general complaint to address broader issues such as homelessness and social exclusion. The WhatsApp chat groups, on the other hand, are used as a channel for information to be acted upon quickly. It was thus discussed in the meetings how it could be maintained as such, how information could be channelled most effectively and how it could be kept uncluttered from chattiness and thus taken seriously as a communicator for specific, serious and urgent events. The WhatsApp chat groups are a rather new feature and now form the main medium of communication. I consider them crucial in engaging with uncertainties in Observatory (the local paper *Obslife*, September edition 2015, has reported that at least 40 streets have joined WhatsApp chat groups ‘to share alerts related to safety in their street, as well as other information’). Therefore, a whole chapter is dedicated to analysing WhatsApp chat groups as a medium and potential generator of both, uncertainty and virtual certainty. The local newspaper is mostly written and edited by

Andre Smit, a man who does not make it a secret that crime and security are high on his agenda. His mother was killed in Observatory a few years ago after having moved from the farm area in which his family grew up with very little criminal activity compared to Cape Town, especially with regards to violent crimes. As the editor of the local news and head of the Observatory Police Forum (OPF), his views have a considerable impact on a general sense of safety within the community. I therefore found it important to follow and analyse the local news content closely.

3.2. Conclusion: Learning to know and to see

In closing, the way I made sense of fear and vulnerability in the suburb was guided by an attempt to combine an emic and etic lens. I attempted to include the processes of interpretation and grappling with the space that I experienced during the months of doing research. In order to reconcile binary concepts of ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’, ‘subject’ and ‘object’, ‘science’ and ‘art’ I included what I found to be shared concerns connecting me and my informants as well as differing traumas and ways of seeing the world as well as shifting fears and comfort zones. Overall, I seek to offer not a complete picture of how vulnerability to crime is dealt with in the suburb but one offering the reader the opportunity to put this ethnography aside with a sense of

having gained an insight into the complexities of the social phenomenon analysed on the one hand, and more questions and strings of thoughts spinning from them on the other.

As became clear through my discussion of the ethics of researching the vulnerability to crime and my methodologies, my body played a big part in conducting my research and collecting data on people looking for threats to the community. In becoming part of the ONW and patrolling with others, bodies, stories and movements started mingling and merging. The main argument of this dissertation is that ‘suspicion’ is cultivated, embodied and performed. I thus also have to acknowledge that *I* was ‘doing’ anthropology in this context as a performance. Not only did I find myself constructing my scholarly persona in gaining acceptance as a researcher in the field, I was also constructing myself as a patroller and thus as part of the organization. Here, performance served as a lens and method. Turner (1985) defines humankind as ‘homo performans’, a culture-inventing and self-making creature (Turner 1985:178). This also means that different constructions and inventions are not always harmoniously existing next to each other. Sharing experiences, walks and stories rendered me a part of the space researched and inextricably intertwined with the organization and my informants.

Even having gained a somewhat emic perspective, my view of the world (as anyone else’s) is not always consistent. My own and my informants’ interpretations and understandings of this context have multiple meanings and layers and, yet, our ways of knowing and seeing form particular realities (see Nyamnjoh, 2012). I have attempted to render them visible by describing my own body-self in relationship with others and in the process of learning to interpret my being in this familiar space in new ways. I thus deliberately included large, unedited chunks of my field notes in order for the reader to gain a better understanding of the process that was involved in gathering data and a selection of the very pieces this thesis is based on. I used my ‘self’ as an ethnographic resource (Collins & Gallinat, 2010). As mentioned before and as has been clear in anthropology since Malinowski, subject-object distinctions are always blurred in conducting fieldwork and writing an ethnography. I entered the field with the particular memories and embodied knowledge that render me myself. During the write-up I aimed at an inclusion of this knowledge that renders it transparent how it was learnt and acquired – in the hope of giving the reader the opportunity to judge for him- or herself whether my conclusions and interpretations are appropriate.

Chapter 4 - The everyday texture and architecture of fear in the suburb: patrollers and their strategies and accessories of security

Abstract:

In this chapter, I look at the ONW as a particular kind of community and local networks in their crime prevention strategies as aiming to generate a notion of agency and security. This notion, I argue, is largely produced through the idea of relationality with strategies and social networks being both, self-segregating and fostering relationships as well as a sense of belonging. The chapter draws on concrete strategies, employed to combat a perceived vulnerability to crime. 'The patroller' will be introduced as a form of human technology or software of surveillance, complimenting himself with a hardware of accessories and strategies of safety. It also draws on a noteworthy disharmony between notions of Observatory as a physical space - in which suspicion is cultivated and becomes embodied, strategic practice - and as a metaphorical space - in which equality is expressively and creatively celebrated by many.

4.0. Introduction

In *month of year*, the Streetopia festival took place, planned by the organisers of the spectacular AfrikaBurn art event, which attracts great numbers of people to the Karoo region of South Africa every year. Streetopia turned suburban Observatory, snuggled to Cape Town on the very southern tip of Africa, into a fantasyland of bristling streets, covered in creative crayon outbursts, outdoor art-exhibitions and screenings. The music and movements of the colourfully dressed up visitors made the suburb seem like a fantastic micro-universe, Alice in her Wonderland may slip in unpreparedly. At the same time that the space underwent a transformation without limits of the imagination, the local NW got ready and positioned themselves in the side streets to prevent criminally-minded opportunists from taking advantage of the carefree. The planned transformation of the space into a land of fun and ease was temporary and - by the people who inhabit the space on a daily and long-term basis - expected to be accompanied by a rather dark flipside. This chapter engages with the ways in which people in Observatory and NW members in particular engage with this 'dark flipside', namely a notion of insecurity and vulnerability to crime, on a daily basis by using different strategies.

4.1. The ONW patrollers

In order to show that the ONW and Observatory are spaces that cannot uncritically be summarized as a ‘community’, implying homogeneity, I introduce what I have found to be local key actors in the community with regards to dealing with crime. While there is a need to establish a sense of *relationality* (Butler, 2011) through a shared notion of a ‘suspect’ in the group, members have different motivations and ways to engage with the ‘phantom criminal’ as well as with other members of the ONW. Richard, the security manager employed by the *Obsid*, likes to describe the ONW as a ‘family’. While I am certain that not all of the members would share this notion, I found the ONW and local networks extending from it to resemble notions of family as there are close ties and rather loose connections – conflicts and comforting intimacy. Whichever way one would want to put it, the members of the ONW (the active ones as well as the WhatsApp-only members) are looking for some form of comfort within this organisation and understand their being tied to it as securing to some extent.

Richard, the ‘superman’

Richard, has been employed by the *Obsid* since the beginning of 2015. He tends to maintain his self-styled image as an ex-military official with whom one cannot negotiate. His perfectly angular hair-cut, perfectly kept moustache and straight and determined way of walking, (almost marching) the streets underline this image. At the same time, he opened up about his two failed marriages and his son who does not want to be in contact with him. He also told me about a period of homelessness in his life, which makes me re-think his stories of getting up early to remove shelter-less people from the area (often whilst beating them). The first day I met him on a patrol on a cold and dark Tuesday evening in May last year, he exclaimed that the problem with Observatory is that there are too many ‘liberals’ in the area who make his job impossible with their ‘pointless discussions’ on care for homeless people and other social outcasts. At the same time Richard enjoys being asked for help and tends to give me a summary of all the things he has accomplished in his role as a security manager since our last meeting. When Richard patrols in a bigger group he performs as what he believes to be a ‘good patroller’: being emotionless while following procedures of removing unwanted bodies by any means. ‘Success’ then becomes reported in the WhatsApp chat group. However, walking with him when he is on his own offers a different experience as will become clear later. Richard explains that people ask him to be a superhero, expecting him to fulfil everybody’s conflicting needs and opinions, even though complaints are inevitable whether he goes the ‘liberal’ route of treating unwanted

characters nicely or if he removes them in a rude and violent way (these conflicts become, for instance, very clear in debates on to what extent vagrants should be attributed rights. See Chapter 7 for examples).

Christina, ‘moral backbone’ of the ONW

Christina is the secretary of the ONW, does all the administrative care-taking and is always approachable for any kinds of concerns around safety, security and comfort. The first night Christina, Richard and I went patrolling as a small group (apart from the usual Tuesday night patrol in our sector), she told me about her life by re-laying one dreadful experience after the other. She revealed that she was sexually abused as a child, was psychologically tormented by her mother when growing up, had a cheating husband and had an addiction to crack, which she overcame four years ago when she met her new husband, Ethan. I was uncertain of how to respond to these horrific stories, given that we had jumped straight from introducing ourselves during the last big patrol and the usual small-talk with the newcomers into the intimate autobiography of a woman who has not been able to break away from the emotional chaos and haunting insecurities of early childhood. Despite Richard’s attempt to steer the conversation elsewhere, Christina sternly continues her narrative. All the trauma of her life stands in sharp contrasts to what she describes as a pure love that she experiences with Ethan. She admits that she would not know what to do without him. I had many long chats with Christina about her depressions (loneliness) and struggles (lack of finances) during patrols and over tea and chocolate at her place. Dealing with the negative spirits around her, she said, is the only way she sees herself continuing with life. Being actively involved in the organisation as the ONW secretary, she says, makes her feel like she has a purpose. Christina’s takes a strong stance when it comes to patrolling. In the chat forums she expressed her violent opposition to what she coined as ‘couch-patrolling’, that is virtual patrolling and the lack of physical presence in the local street and focus on chat and e-mail groups instead - but not without sharp responses from members who felt the need to pronounce that deciding how to be part of this social group should constitute an individual freedom. Local librarian Rosemary, for instance, commented that Christina should ‘please be aware that there are numerous people who do things for the good of Obs. It may not be patrolling - but that should not mean their efforts be negated’.

Richard told me that he and Christina sometimes go out patrolling together when they feel restless and that they have ‘fun like children’. They usually try to intercept the drug trade on the Main Road in front of a club infamously known as a drug hot-spot in the community. The

closing of the 'rouge club' (as some ONW members call it) in October 2015, sparked a long thread of celebrative exclamations and praises directed to the constable in charge and local news editor Andre Smit, who had been reporting on the issue for years. Literally using their bodies as barriers, Richard and Christina stop people from completing their transactions. Christina worries, however, that drug dealers will harm or kill her one day, though she cannot help getting involved and interrupting this spiralling misery. Considering her involvement in the neighbourhood, I was surprised that she moved to another suburb, saying that it was safer. When a growth was found in her jaw bone, Christina became less involved with the ONW, though she continues to fulfil her duties as the secretary of the organisation.

John, 'father' and technology expert of the ONW

John is seen as the father of the ONW. He coordinates events, prepares the two-way radios and facilitates the Facebook group. He can be considered a spiritual leader of the organization who knows most members by name and encourages them to get involved in whatever ways they can. Originally from Holland, John is a retired, single man in his 60s who has spent more than half of his life in Cape Town. He almost always had a broad smile on his face when I see him, whether he is chatting to me or other members. Before visiting him for the first time, Christina, with a smirk on her face, warned me to find an excuse to leave beforehand, lest I would be there hours chatting with him. Much like Richard and Christina, the encouragement of being social constitutes the purpose of the groups and the reason for his involvement. While Christina and Richard take patrols and meetings as opportunities to ward away the negative spirits around them, John likes the idea of a big family, a neighbourhood where everyone knows and supports each other. Coordinating the group seems to give John a purpose, even if he sometimes feels overwhelmed by the task. With an expression of exhaustion showing on his face he admits that he often does not have the energy to do all the things on his bucket list. In the monthly meetings John usually is cut short by chairperson Luke or other members who are keen to leave on time as John's reports are not only long but also told with the slowness of somebody living the moment of a conversation.

Allan, head of Obsid and face of a new era

Allan is the new *Obsid* manager in town and considered a fresh, liberal wind. This is particularly true in comparison to Brian, who has had this position since the beginnings of the *Obsid* and is known as a rather difficult, conservative and pronouncedly manly character. I am told there used to be much friction between him and some of the older, male characters occupying the top

positions of the various social committees with ‘personality conflicts’ being the main reason for this. Allan, is a trained sociologist, is a likable character who seems genuinely interested in peoples’ concerns. He does not show reluctance in combatting social issues proactively. His communication skills become very apparent in the three Security Council meetings I attended in which a strategic plan was meant to be produced concerning what would happen with the current private security contract. Here, very concrete questions came to the table, for instance, what kinds of cameras should be used to keep crime under surveillance, should private security patrol on bicycles or on foot, and how many vehicles are needed to cover ground effectively and attentively. The discussions were long and intense with clashing perspectives between local business owners, self-proclaimed humanists, Richard, ONW chair Luke and local news editor Andre Smit. For Allan, channelling the sometimes heated communication and keeping the links with the ONW is an opportunity to show goals to promote progress in the suburb. He makes it clear that ‘character-clashes’ should not be the centre of strategy-coordinating meetings but that they take place to find solutions and look at issues from all possible angles.

Andre Smit, local news-maker

I have known Andre Smit and his family since 2010, which is when I did an internship for the local newspaper he runs. Andre is very passionate about of crime prevention, particularly since the death of his mother a few years ago. The focus of the newspaper, *Obslife*, is thus often fixed on issues of crime and what Andre considers to be the sources of crime – namely the drug trade in local ‘rouge clubs’ and neglected spaces such as the graveyard by the hospital on the other side of the Main Road, as he explained in a conversation and in local meetings. Andre attends different meetings of local forums and is always up-to-date regarding the different projects. He attends these meetings as a concerned citizen but also as a man generating what he finds to be important local news. In both roles, he also meets with SAPS members for updates. Towards the end of my fieldwork I heard that Andre and his family had moved to another suburb not far from Observatory, Pinelands, which is known to be a quiet family suburb.

Brett Nile, the sheriff of the area

Brett is in his early thirties and is the SAPS Constable responsible for the area. He has an aura that I would not quite interpret as calmness or seriousness but more of a connectedness to the situation he finds himself in. His dominant biceps, decorated with colourful tattoos that tightening his uniform and his pistol worn visibly on his hips communicate a movie-like rawness. When I asked him if the visibility of the weapon may not cause someone to try and

steal it he responded: 'Only if they want to have their arms broken.' Brett tries to attend most of the monthly ONW meetings. 'No, not because he has to', he responds to my question over a cup of coffee at a petrol station close to Observatory. He wants to have ties to the communities and exchanging relevant information concerning crime helps him do his job, which he feels can impact society and change it for the better, he explains. He was assigned to Observatory a few years ago and though he did not choose the area he likes it, he says. Ever since the revival of the ONW and its attempt to establish a work relationship with the police, Brett has been celebrated and his efforts acknowledged in the community. Every time he reports an arrest, the WhatsApp chat group members respond with celebrative icons and express their gratitude, to which he usually responds: 'Just doing my job'. He criticises the 'justice system' and is quick to respond to any complaints posted in the group, stating that he will go to the scene in question or, alternatively, send his colleagues there to help. Even when he is not on duty, Brett makes himself available via WhatsApp and apologises when his response takes longer than a few minutes.

Collette, the 'hen in the basket'

Apart from Christina, Amber is one of the few other frequent female street patrollers and enjoys joking around with the guys. When I asked her why she decided to join the organization she explained that, as a single woman who stays by herself, she does generally not feel safe. The idea of knowing some of the neighbours around eases her anxieties, especially after having experienced two house break-ins in the neighbourhood. When I asked what constituted her insecurities, she insisted that she is actually not that worried. Amber, now in her mid-fourties, is a born-and-bred Cape Townian and has lived in Observatory for most of her life. However, she says, she would prefer living in the City Centre, which she considers to be safer and of a different atmosphere than the suburb. In town, she says, you feel like you can just walk home at night.

Shania, the communicator

Shania has a soft voice and a slow, reflected-sounding way of speaking with a slight American accent. She coordinates the communication amongst those members who do not feel confident or comfortable using WhatsApp and Facebook and contributes gently, but frequently as well as often challengingly to the discussions at the ONW meetings. Her focus often lies on making communication work in a way that members do not feel overwhelmed by the sheer mass of crime-related information in the groups - but without censoring people or denying them

comforting chitchat. She suggested that there be groups in which people can chat about a range of topics as well as one that is a forum for the communication of immediate threats (some sectors have already arranged for this, though sometimes there are disagreements of what information is ‘relevant’, ‘important’ or what constitutes ‘chitchat’).

Peter, the ‘gun nut’

Peter is often talked about as a ‘gun-nut’ and admits that he never goes out patrolling without being fully-gearred. He patrols by himself if he is not accompanying Officer Brett Nile and says he likes to do things ‘his way’. His day job is body-guarding a local politician of the Democratic Alliance (DA). His comments in the meetings are often related to ‘pragmatic’ solution-making as opposed prolonged discussions and attempting to be ‘politically correct’. In the monthly meetings he often surrounds himself with members who speak the same mother tongue as him, Afrikaans.

Luke, the strategist

Luke is the unchallenged chairperson of the ONW and has good skills in presenting and summarizing issues in a calm and clear manner as well as facilitating and moderating discussions without upsetting any members. He is also one of the members who are keen to stick to the time schedule of the program that is usually sent out by Christina roughly a week before the monthly meetings. However, meetings always exceed the allocated time frames, leading to several of the attendants leaving quietly and long before the closing statements whilst others keep the discussions going by continuously providing new ideas and discussion topics, which Luke then tries to channel and contain.

Members of the ONW have different motivations to be part of the organization and different ways to contribute to it. Luke, Brett and Matthew (all amongst the more frequent physical street patrollers) are all fathers of under-one-year olds and see patrolling as a way of protecting their family. Despite the fact that the three of them get along well, joke around and pass the time rather easily, patrolling is more of a duty than a social event. The different characters of patrollers make it clear that the ONW is not a homogenous space and that the subtle ties of power (Foucault, 1978) spun between individuals in an attempt to combat crime as a group form particular synergies, leading to the cultivation and embodiment of ‘suspicion’ in distinguished ways. In the following section, I provide an extract of a monthly ONW meeting that I attended in order to outline the dynamics involved in strategizing within the organisation and the conceptualisations of crime involved in it.

4.2. Negotiating fear and idealised notions of local realities

Field notes from meeting on 23.09.2015

[...] Nineteen of us came to the monthly ONW meeting this Wednesday evening and we were seated at 6.35pm, after Luke had encouraged us to be and to move or conversations from outside the building to the classroom-sized room of the former school building (now constituting the community hall). Luke greets everyone from the front of the room with the blackboard at his back after Christina has taken down the names of all attendees.

The first item on the agenda, raised by Richard, is the fencing off of what are speculated to be escape routes of criminals. 'But we as a community', Richard says, 'have to complain until this thing gets done!' After his mentioning of other current criminal 'problem zones', such as my street corner where Cook Street and Polo Road meet and where people have repeatedly been robbed in the street (a crime that is related to the minibus taxis that take this route as one commentator claims), local news editor Andre announces that he has something to share. After all eyes have settled on him he explains that the Obsid has to be backed by the Observorian citizens. After all, 'there are limits to what they can do!', he says. Murmurs of agreement are complimented by comments from different parts of the room about the responsibility of citizens in a community. After a few minutes Luke sees it necessary to continue with the proceedings and move to the next item on the agenda: The WhatsApp chat groups as a channel of communication.

While the groups are mushrooming with members and increasing on a weekly basis. Furthermore, new street groups are being formed frequently due to a perceived increase of crime levels in the neighbourhood. The question of what the impact of the technology on the community may be is raised by Luke. He poses the question of whether there should be a prioritizing of certain kind of messages to make the groups more effective as a channel of communication. This would lead to dividing members into 'chit-chat groups', as Luke calls them, and the ones with information relevant to the police and Obsid would react quickly. Shania raises her hand and explains calmly that the groups

make her anxious and that some people in her street feel the same way. They have thus implemented an email system to avoid a flood of information that one might not want. They also carefully discussed in a meeting what kinds of information is useful and important and what subheadings should be used to indicate which messages are essential to be read for everybody. Conversations spread through the room about what may constitute ‘too much information’ and what may foster anxiety. Luke calls for a going back to order.

Having the floor as the technology expert of the group, John starts to elaborate on aspects such as the introduction of a new cell phone program called ‘Zello’ that may add to the existing two-way radio system in the near future. He also talks about the popularity of the ONW Facebook page (largely to non-locals, as John identifies) and the channelling of different radio networks for the various private security workers hired in the area onto the same radio network. John takes his time with each of these thematic items and chooses his wordings carefully whilst gesturing slowly. His thick glasses and wide toothy smile give all of his comments a certain intensity. After people have started impatiently shifting in their chairs, John is cut short by Luke who talks about the lack of patrollers now. Roughly 8-15 out of the 107 members are actually patrolling the street, he estimates. A young man offers the explanation that this may be because of a general association of the group with a certain type of white, middle-class male that many people in Observatory might not want to be associated with. Some nod in agreement and comments are made that, essentially, the ONW is understood as a bunch of white guys spying on their black neighbours.

I am pushing myself up in my seat, regaining some energy through the lively discussion. Richard, who is sitting next to me, is rolling his eyes and shaking his head, as if one of the two ways of expressing disagreement were insufficient to communicate his stance on the topic. ‘The organization should communicate that they are accessible and welcoming’ flows a comment from one end of the room while others add ‘yes, we should brand patrols in a way that makes people realize that they are about caring for the community and nothing else’. Shania carefully suggests that this may be true but that the

factor of racial categorizing is something that is not irrelevant and that should be negotiated carefully. Simon, head of the Observatory Civic Association (OCA) talks about the role of the ONW as a social movement and others suggest that the ONW ought to be visible and that the essence of a community should be actual social interaction in some form, and not staying behind closed doors and communicating over the phone. Richard chants that it is important that the community spirit is bigger than crime in order to fight it and murmurs and sub-conversations have, by now, spread across the whole room.

I realise that my notebook and pen had flopped into my lap and that, in the comfort of the slightly raised noise level of the very civil discussion, my thoughts had drifted to a distant memory of watching 'life of Brian' an episode of the British BBC sketch comedy of the 70s Monty Python. In my head I replayed the scene of a group of men, sitting around a table and continuously exclaiming that 'now is a time to act' and not to talk and discuss without progressing into action. When a young woman comes running into the tent and confronts them with an emergency that actually required their action, the men proceeded strategizing and intellectualizing while the woman with increasing desperation tries to explain to them that the solution is easy: getting up of from their chairs and stopping the injustice from happening through physical interruption. 'Yes, yes' the men agree while still sitting and start discussing the importance of actions while the woman gestures widely in disbelief and leaves the tent. In the satire, theories turned out to be insufficient and too abstract to apply in reality. In the NW, the 'doers' and the ones getting caught up in discussions seem to occupy similarly opposite camps than in the movie. [End of field notes].

Although it was not my first monthly ONW meeting, it held a defining moment of my fieldwork. I experienced the meeting and the getting together of the different patrollers as a very particular group of people that have a number of things in common, such as a shared notion of there being a threat to their well-being that compromises their living and being in the neighbourhood (this, as will become clear in the chapter to follow, is tied to a particular,

cultivated and embodied notion of ‘the suspect’). At the same time, there is a routine of dissecting and discussing items on the agenda beyond exhaustion (as some like Richard and Peter perceive it). As a specific community, members of the ONW consider themselves ‘ethically bound to’ the community norms (Butler, 2010). For Peter, the ‘gun nut’, for instance, the democratic decision of disassociating the organisation with the carrying of weapons led to him patrolling by himself which he claimed to prefer. When the discussion was still fresh he commented in the Google chat group:

[...] been doing that for the past 15 years (doing things on my own), it’s just nice to be in a group, getting to know other people and so on.... but yes, have been doing [things on my own].

When ‘dwellings’ were found to have been built during a patrol I attended, very near the big intersection on the Main Road, some members of the ONW were outraged and claimed that illegal structures would negatively impact the suburb. In an email-thread on the topic, other members posed the question of what constitutes an ‘illegal structure’. The various discussions show that, within the group, what is ‘normal’ and ‘ethical’ – what shall be protected and secured and what poses a threat to ideal notions of this community has to undergo a decision-making process, leading to the distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the group that many try to avoid. The ‘norms and ethics’ of the ONW need to be secured in order to draw the defining lines of the group and define its limits of moral and physical support.

In order to relate to other peoples’ issues, social groups valorise ‘nearness as a condition for encountering and knowing the other, and so tend to figure ethical relations as binding upon those whose face we can see, whose name we can know and pronounce, those we can already recognize, whose form and face is familiar (Butler, 2010). In Observatory it is not just physical proximity that triggers solidarity. The sufferings of Warren, the young man who can be seen shooting heroin a hundred metres from my house on the Main Road and who is known to most of the community by name are not the same sufferings of a person who is a member of the group and has formal accommodation somewhere in the suburb. The struggles of social outcasts are noted and are reflected upon as human tragedies by some members of the group. They do, however, not cause the same reactions as events that emphasise a corporeal fragility shared by everybody in the suburb. When on patrol with John and others in the lower part of the suburb near the train line, we passed through a little street behind the local supermarket when John pointed out one of the houses. ‘Have you heard?’ he asked, telling me the story of a woman who was stabbed multiple times in her home by an intruder. She survived the attack.

This made me aware of the power that the proximity of trauma can carry. Locally experienced trauma, especially in a context where people are relatively well equipped and safety-pampered for criminal intrusions, can have a far reach and constitutes a reminder of the threat the community believes to be exposed to on a daily basis. Like Butler (2010), I would like to make a distinction here between *precariousness* - the corporeal vulnerability shared even by the privileged, and *precarity* (Butler, 2008) - the particular vulnerability imposed on the poor and disenfranchised. In Obz the fragility of bodies differentiates and equalises at the same time. While all bodies are somewhat bullied by injury, suffering, and death (*precariousness*), some bodies are more exposed (*precarity*) while others are more protected. Butler (2010) argues that *precariousness* is shared by all; *precarity* is ‘distributed unequally’ (Butler, 2010:25). Singular and tragic events like the one I was repeatedly confronted with, locally serve as a way to emphasise the *precariousness* of those recognised as community members and as a way to justify the social exclusion of those whose lives are already shaped by *precarity*.

The ONW group is unique in its processes of intellectualizing and dissecting the themes behind routinized practices and the plain summarizing of items on the agenda – items that are related to the strategic spatial exclusion of bodies considered threatening in the suburb. Simple distinctions between bodies may be the basis for the functionality of the group (bodies looking for bodies that are somehow different) but are not internalised without being philosophically challenged. There is a dominant wish for a shared community spirit that keeps being expressed in all social forums available, without discussions leading to an actual increase of street patrollers as agents who are capable of moving away from a tendency to do what Christina has coined as ‘couch-patrolling’ towards first-hand observations and the physical getting-together as a group. The main floor to share feelings of *precariousness* remains virtual. However, the circumstance that a number of people actually attend the meetings and fuel them with their thoughts or form part of other local events and initiatives such as the sub-meetings in some streets show that the need to feel related is accommodated in ways that do not necessarily require the embodiment of the atypical patroller (described further in chapter 3).

So far I have focused on introducing the ONW as a distinct kind of community and ‘the patroller’ within it by looking at aspects of *relationality* (Butler, 2011). ‘The patroller’ emerging within this cultural space can be seen as the hardware in combatting crime upon which corporeal strategies and technologies (as a software) can be developed. The next section of the chapter outlines the strategies, technologies and accessories of safety and security. These everyday

behaviour mechanisms are expressions of how crime and its prevention are understood and translated upon bodily practices within the local context.

4.3. Strategies and accessories of safety and security

Part of the everyday routines in the suburb is locking up everything that can be locked (houses, cars, etc.) and in many cases activating the alarm system. While this behaviour is not specific to Observatory or even Cape Town, having a car alarm, gear-lock, engine immobilizer or automatic door-lock systems when starting the engine was not something I was familiar with before coming here. Although many modern cars now have alarm systems in Germany, they seem more an addition to a sense of safety than part of a concrete strategy shaping everyday lives. At the local Security Council meetings I attended, the latest technologies in cameras were discussed as well as the advantage of them being mobile. Crime hotspots that can be predicted for the near future based on crime-data by a new computer program that Richard is learning to use can thus be monitored by the literal following of crime patterns. It was surprising that there were no concerns voiced with regards to the privacy of locals who would also be observed and ‘caught’ on camera²⁹. Leaving things behind in the car is considered a mistake by the patrollers and is almost seen as an invitation for a break-in. It is also considered something that foreigners tend to do who are less aware of certain risks or have not embodied and cultivated suspicion to the same degree. ‘Educating’ foreigners in crime patterns and how to counteract them is something frequently mentioned to me as a critical task in preventing incidents. Electric fencing and high walls (the latter of which Richard claims to actually hinder by-passers to get involved if somebody breaks in) are the common sight in Cape Townian suburbs like Observatory, indicating that people here may not be merely architecturally equipped and ready to combat crime. The clear lines, metaphorically and physically drawn between private and public space, thus become strongly emphasised in an attempt to create a safe space. Alarm systems, the standard in many households, may even be enhanced with additions by individuals. John, for instance, arranges glass bottles by his door so that, at night, he will be woken up by the sound of the bottles falling in case technology fails and the alarm system does not go off. It was John who conducted a research in the suburb, showing that 60% of the neighbours in Observatory do not have alarm systems or do not activate them. One person in the Google chat group

²⁹ I remember a lively and debate about state-surveillance in Germany when cameras were planned to be put up in the city centre of Frankfurt.

circulated this information and it was interpreted as an invitation to thieves to choose this suburb in particular to break into houses. Another commentator responded that it is dangerous to blame victims of crime instead of the perpetrator.

Being alert and equipped

Being aware of the presence of others in the street constitutes the 101 of being safe in the suburb, as was suggested by other patrollers. The feeling one has when walking down a street with another person being present depends very much on their appearance, gender and way of walking. Christina described a situation in which there were three young, ‘dodgy looking’ men walking towards her in one of the small streets in the suburb. When they appeared to be splitting up so as to attack her from different angles, she ran as fast as she could. Those young men, she thought, were following a crime-pattern or strategy that she reacted to by making a fast decision based on instinct. Having identified the men as ‘suspicious looking’ to a degree that she was certain a physical closeness would lead to an attack, she saw only one strategy of prevention: running.

Many people I talked with had an accessory of choice to defend themselves in an attack. This can mean holding of their house keys as a ready weapon or having a dog as both a walking companion and a noisy and aggressive response to perceived danger (with the dog’s embodiment of suspicion being cultivated by his or her owner and thus mirroring it in an animalistic, instinct-led form). The use of classified weapons was a hot topic of discussion in the group in June/July last year (2015), leading to a vote in the next ONW meeting as to whether they are appropriate to be carried when on patrol as an ONW member. Guns in particular were passionately opposed by some members of the groups, mainly in form of email commentary. The argument that fire weapons increase the risk of violent conflicts instead of reducing them and a discomfort of being associated with an armed group of people were voiced. The final vote on the topic in the not well-attended meeting resulted in 65% voting against the carrying of firearms. Having the ‘right’ pepper spray was also topic of discussion in the WhatsApp chat groups with Constable Brett ending up promising Christina an effective spray with which it is easy to immobilise an attacker without accidentally spraying oneself with the pain-inducing liquid. Knives were also carried around by many. A less potentially harmful response to perceived threats constitutes the heavy, black two-way radios used by the ONW, some of the private security in the area and the police as well as the vests with the ONW logo on them. As

a sign of interconnectedness and technology that triggers quick, organised responses, radios and vests are believed to scare criminals away or, as a less desirable alternative, to organise their criminal activity in a less visible (and thus reportable) manner. Even in the sanctity of the home, ready responses to crime are a matter of concern in the suburb. The local newspaper *Obslife* regularly distributes a list of numbers that can be called in case of an emergency. This list is attached to a magnet, which can be attached to a refrigerator for speedy access. The paper was meant to be distributed to every household with the Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking of the hired delivery person, ensuring the reliable distribution of the rather crime-focused news to every local household.

Locking-off and locking-in

In this context I found one particular Google chat group message quite interesting. The aged local librarian, Rose, suggested that the local dog park be double locked upon entering it, making it harder for an intruder to come in and giving the person who had gained access to the park after collecting the key at the *Obsid* more time to react and make a plan to protect him- or herself. This message made it clear that the access to the local dog park is limited to people considered appropriate to enter it and occupy this fairly sparse and plain environment. The park is protected by a lockable fence but, it seems, not conclusively a safe haven but just another potential crime scene. Even though the message shared in the forum was not responded to (which is not unusual), it was a powerful reminder of how impactful the fear of crime can be for some individuals on their everyday routines. What is more, while most ONW members or inhabitants of the suburb might not share this particular fear of being attacked while walking their dog in a gated and locked environment, the publication and circulation of fears in the form of chat messages or through conversations renders these fears accessible (if not necessarily understandable) to a great number of people in the neighbourhood. Questions of the emotional impact of the routine of sharing should also be considered when thinking about the circulation of phone snapshots of criminal ‘suspects’ and the posting of many crime stories on a daily basis through the chat groups.

The threat of street crime and less recognised daily companions

The walking-home service provided through the *Obsid* by the local private security company constitutes an institutionalised initiative to ensure safety and is provided throughout the night for those who want to be mobile after dark without driving a car or hiring a taxi. By providing the company of young men for the way home (the security personal on the street can be described as exclusively in their 20s and 30s and male), bodies considered at risk to crime become freed from their corporeal constraints. Unsafe spaces suddenly become accessible - albeit not freely and only in the company of these uniformed young men, on foot and with point of departure and destination being in Observatory. The irony that lies within this strategy of security, offered within this suburb only, is that the young men offering the service come from the outskirts of Cape Town, the township areas in which crime is thought to originate from³⁰. This means that the young men have to confront their own 'brothers', as Sipho who works for the district security company stated in a conversation. He is new in the company and just started travelling every day from Khayelitsha to Observatory a couple of weeks before our conversation in October. There are white people who commit crimes, he says. There was a man he heard of living close by who is a paedophile. However, he does not usually look out for white people, he says, as most criminals are black. It is not just ONW members and white suburbia in general that has internalised and perpetuate (black) township males as the most likely criminal in Cape Town. The stigma is deeply embedded across what are tendentially conceptualised as inherently different sub-cultural islands of the city and its outskirts. As soon as Sipho and his colleagues strip off their uniforms, signifying their good intentions, and make their way back home, they may become categorised as 'suspects' themselves. The authority of their uniforms, further distinguishable with the emblem of the company can no longer protect *them* as they go home. Their risk of becoming victims to crime steadily increases after a day of securing the lives of others. While the presence of the private security personal on a daily basis might not be considered effective in the combat of crime (many complain about their lack of motivation in doing their job), they do constitute a physical presence and represent a constant effort to combat crime in the suburb.

4.4. Conclusion

Levels of trust in fellow human beings are not the same everywhere. In Holland, eight prisons were closed last year³¹, due to a lack of reported crime. At the same time, the closing of prisons

³⁰ See, for instance, Seekings (1996) as local reference.

³¹ <http://www.thedailystar.net/world/netherlands-close-8-prisons-lack-criminals-97480>

in the country on the north-western edge of Europe can be understood as an expression of social trust. The confidence that levels of crime (and thus the breaking of societal trust), will remain low in the near future are tied to an optimistic idea of sharing space. Through my fieldwork in Observatory, I found there to be a very particular kind of social distrust prevailing and therefore competing with the wish to cultivate a community open to everybody. A recurrent question was why some people, even though they may not actually go on patrols or prefer patrolling alone, still insist on going to the monthly meeting that is meant to offer feedback from the main patrollers with its minutes being circulated via email. The reason that the group has not entirely slipped into a virtual sphere is that there is a need to relate to neighbours on a physical level, even if this is not always successfully administered. The feeling that the 'community spirit ought to be bigger than crime in order to fight it' (as Richard suggested) was prevalent amongst my informants. While patrolling with a two-way radio is traditionally considered to be the main strategy in signalling a resistance to crime, practices of 'talking crime' and circulating a vast number of warnings and images are much more frequently practiced. With the WhatsApp chat groups growing consistently and people from outside the suburb taking greater interest in the ONW Facebook group (numbers), the radius of 'talking crime' is considerable. The talk of crime in the different forums of social intercourse established for the organisation is sometimes ambiguous and often takes philosophical or even virtual shape in the different social forums. However, 'talk' solidifies in concrete practices, decisions and encounters of bodies within the suburb. The life worlds created through the group and its shared 'ethics and norms' (Butler, 2010) carry the vision of a more secure life in Observatory and will therefore be central throughout this dissertation.

What was experienced as a peak of crime at the time of the research led to a rethinking of what has to be done to ensure safety for oneself and others and an emphasis on particular practices and strategies of safety with the revival of the ONW serving as a testimony to this and thus offering an appropriate and interesting case study for this dissertation dealing with suburban strategies against a perceived vulnerability to crime. The recent mushrooming of ONW WhatsApp chat groups and the constant circulation of 'crime news' and pictures of 'suspects' somewhat conflict with the liberal, and bohemian image of the suburb. The data show a noteworthy disharmony between notions of Observatory as a physical space - in which suspicion is cultivated and becomes embodied practice and part of a strategy - and as a metaphorical space (see Jansen, 2008) - in which equality is expressively and creatively celebrated by many (for instance through various projects of integration involving people

released from the mental clinic across the river, for ex-prisoners and others who are socially kept apart). As I have shown, the relatedness of individuals in the organisation is largely fostered by ‘talking crime’ and rendering experience immediate, combatable and sometimes visual, especially with the help of new technologies. At the same time, *relationality* (Butler, 2011) and patrolling as prime strategies of security also encourage practices of spatial exclusion that reproduce certain social spaces in Cape Town as reserved for the privileged.

This chapter has shown how people in ‘Obs’ and in the NW relate and strategize in terms of safety and security. In the following chapters the composition of relationships remains relevant but they will also show how these mould into the cultivation of notions of ‘the suspect’ (Chapter 2) and practices of patrolling – physically (Chapter 3) and virtually (Chapter 4). In this study, ‘being suspicious’ and conceptualising ‘the suspect’ are interpreted as the creation of spaces in which security strategies are developed and self-segregation is administered (de Certeau 2000). In so doing, I focus strongly on the life worlds that are created and nourished through corporeal practices of patrolling and ‘chatting’ and the roles occupied within them.

Chapter 5 - The Phantom Suspect: cultivating and embodying suspicion in Observatory

Abstract:

The previous chapter introduced the 'patrollers' of the suburb and the different ways in which members of the community relate to practices of monitoring the streets, 'talking crime' and how social ties are established within the Observatory. This chapter explores the forms that suspicion assumes and how criminal threats are conceptualised, imagined and reacted to. I argue that patrolling the suburb as a safety strategy increases notions of agency not only through a sense of relationality but also through embodied practices of patrolling. 'Suspicion', the motivating spirit in throwing on a bib and searching streets for criminals or checking the group messages at home, is something that is learnt and cultivated; conditioning bodily experience in distinctive ways. As a cultivated phantom figure, 'the suspect' is seen as source of insecurities and a perceived vulnerability to crime. The chapter outlines the ways in which the 'suspect' is conceptualised and how particular understandings of the figure of 'the criminal' translate into strategic and embodied practices of patrolling and monitoring the suburb.

5.0. Introduction

Within the practice of patrolling as a strategy to combat notions of vulnerability to crime lies a core of social distrust, saturated with notions of individually experienced *precariousness* (Butler, 2010). Through the eyes of the patroller, every person encountered in the streets is identified as either potential criminals or trustworthy individuals with no intent to do any harm. Baier (1986) describes trust as the reliance on another person's good will (and perhaps minimal good will). The very idea of combing the streets of an area for criminals implies that a) (some) people are easily identifiable as lacking good will and thus being a threat to oneself and b) that the self-declared patroller is trust-worthy and therefore acts as a moral compass to identify individuals as 'suspicious', sorting the social wheat from the chaff. Baier (1986:234)) states that 'We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted'. What I have described as an 'air of violence' so far is what has intrigued me to research social distrust or suspicion to begin with. The data show that new social constellations and forms of trust evolve from institutionalised practices of patrolling the neighbourhood, feeding from a form of social distrust (like the ONW 'family').

Furthermore, very particular notions of distrust and suspicion that socially manifest through the body – in the form of individual practice, shared group ideology and the phantomising of ‘the criminal’. The following section describes the cultivation and embodiment of suspicion using my own body in its engagement with other bodies in patrolling Observatory through an ethnographic lens. I grapple with the question of who this suspect is, receiving attention of the social forums and during the patrols.

5.1. My first patrol

It is a cold and windy Cape Townian winter night and I scheduled my first patrol with ONW chairperson Luke for 9.30pm on 30.06.2015. I was told, via WhatsApp, that we would be joined by others. I make a mental note of the 11-hour shift at a call centre that I have the next, for which I usually get up at 6am. The prospect of walking in the cold until 11pm is not very appealing at this moment. However, this seems to be the only regular patrol taking place at the time and so I am sitting on my bed, dressed in my warmest jacket and ready to be picked up by the group.

[Notes taken after patrol, late evening on the 30.06.2015]

After a little meet and greet we were finally walking the streets of Observatory and I was busy trying to strike up a conversation here and there in a casual manner. At the same time, I was trying to explain my intention of researching coping mechanisms as a reaction to being exposed to crime without making the group feel like a bunch of zoo animals being observed. Through all this, I forgot that we were actually on a patrol and not merely a group of people taking a walk, chatting and getting connected. This suddenly changed when we reached the Main Road and passed a few drunk people, looking at us curiously. Most of us were wearing bibs, identifying us as the ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ and attracting attention through the photoluminescent strips on them. Some of us were holding walkie-talkies in our hands. The dynamics of our group changed when Richard, the security manager of the area who had been talking about his work for most of the walk, identified a man in his late twenties or early thirties to be the suspect of a case of theft that occurred the previous day. We picked up our pace to catch up with him and dropped our conversations. I looked at Amber in search for instructions of what to do as I had no idea what the protocol in this situation may be. ‘What is going to happen now?’, I asked her and she replied ‘ahm, we’re just going to follow him a little to see where he goes’. Richard spoke into his walkie-talkie, reaching out to the private security

personnel he is supervising. I was surprised by the rush of excitement triggered by the abrupt change in dynamics. On the spur of the moment, I was keen to follow this 'suspicious' person, described as a 'Charly' male (a substitution for the apartheid term 'Coloured') in red sneakers. I was suddenly very aware that being seen in the street as a unified group of people, with common symbols and similar ways of walking conveying this to anyone we encounter, I felt our little patrol group [was] communicating and embodying a certain form of power without having the need to actually interact or interfere with a person or situation. Moving through the suburb, held as a group and in search of the same things seemed to make a difference. The ways in which we held ourselves as a group and our unified presence had an impact on the particular space we moved through, even if only for a short while and affecting only the handful of people we encountered. [End of field notes].

Thinking about the experience later at my home it became clear that patrolling is a rather complex social process. The NW had just been revived at the beginning of the year (half a year earlier) because a considerable number of Observatory residents (more than 10%) considered it necessary and the private security strategy established through the government subsidised local improvement district (*Obsid*) was considered ineffective in the combat of crime. This means that all of the patrollers (except for Amber, who was active in the previous NW that was called Obswatch) are in the process of learning how to patrol, learning where and what to find 'suspicious' and worth reporting. It also means that a concrete understanding of the cultural essence and transformative purpose of the group is in the process of being negotiated – and will, likely, keep being renegotiated in the future.

What people look for, predominantly if the streets are empty during late patrols, generally depends on their personal concerns. Patrollers look out for littering, hidden drugs in flower beds, and items left in cars that might attract thieves. Patrollers also learn how the most common crimes are committed. Whether we walk in silence or are laughing, I always find something comforting in walking as a group and I am able to move in a way that I had not previously moved at this time of the day, feeling free and unassailable. It became clear that being part of the neighbourhood impacts the corporeal inhabitancy of this place, due to a process of 'learning crime' and encountering it as a group.

During fieldwork, I often found myself looking at houses and comparing their levels of safety. 'They should not leave their bin out there', I would say to myself, thinking of a comment

Richard had made the other day. ‘It can be used as supporting tool in breaking in!’ I found my body readying itself for a patrol - for watching out for ‘bad guys’ when I was walking the local streets by myself. Essentially my body was cultivating a distinct form of suspicion. While ideas of who the ‘bad guys’ of the neighbourhood are and what precisely renders a behaviour ‘suspicious’ or inappropriate may vary within the suburb (as I will outline in hereinafter), considering oneself a patroller of the neighbourhood and learning how to hold oneself as such impacts on one’s being in a space.

Another patrolling experience in January 2016 stressed the importance of feeling connected to the group. I was meant to meet Richard at his *Obsid* office at 4.30am on Saturday, the 16th of January. When my alarm rang this early Saturday morning I jumped out of bed to get ready. I walked down the dark and empty streets nervously, turning around with every ‘strange’ noise I heard. Not being used to (and frequently being advised not to) walk alone at night and after a recent spate of robberies in the suburb I was alert and ready to run if necessary. I clutched my phone and my keys in the pockets of my black parker, the only items I brought along. Standing in front of Richard’s office I realised that the lights were still off inside and I waited outside the white little Victorian house, shifting my position every now and then to change my perspective on what was happening around me, all the while looking out for Richard. About 50 metres away from me and close to the Lower Main Road two men and a woman seemed to be sleeping off their drunkenness. One of the men kept looking at me, presumably because I did the same thing or because he was curious about what I might be waiting for. After 20 minutes and failed attempts to contact Richard, I decided to walk back home. I walked fast, imagining that, if I were on ‘patrol’ with another person, I would be walking in a slow and comfortable manner – even if on the lookout for ‘suspicious characters’.

Mauss (1936) considers the manner in which people walk or eat to be bodily techniques, as a craft to be learnt, which become adapted depending on different situations. He understands bodily actions as the embodiment of a particular cultural context with intersecting factors such as gender and class impacting varying practices. Bourdieu (1990) developed this idea further into the idea of the *habitus*, binding people into groups. In Observatory, the vulnerability to crime and the state of *precarity* it establishes can be seen to translate into habits and particularly developed bodily skills. The ways in which vulnerabilities become embodied vary but are very revealing when it comes to the making of self, identity and belonging (Van Wolputte, 2004). Being a patroller requires the making and inventing of a particular cultural space and self within

it, manifested through the cultivation of certain ideas and embodied practices and strategies to ensure safety. Christina mentioned once that there are some members who prefer walking alone, which, she added, she considers to be pointless. ‘How would they know what to look for, if they haven’t learnt from somebody else?’ she asks rhetorically, looking at me intensely over the red frame of her glasses. Learning to patrol as a bodily technique in combatting *precarity* (Butler, 2008) and insecurity becomes adapted in different ways. Throughout my observations, I found the cultivation and embodiment of suspicion to be both, part of a shared group *habitus* and individually negotiated, based on individual fears and past experiences in the making of a new identity that finds a comforting notion of belonging within the ONW.

Thus far, I have shown that understandings of what is ‘suspect’ (or suspicious) can impact the body and that individual interpretations can be difficult to separate neatly from the dynamics and views of the group. The following section looks at shared understandings of what constitutes a ‘suspect’. It also shows that motivations and foci of searching for ‘suspects’ vary.

5.2. Who are we looking for?

John, the ‘father’ of the *ONW*, intends (but has not gotten around) to organise a ‘learning patrol’ during which people interested in patrolling can do precisely that – be trained in what to look out for. However, all my informants explained that the indicators of what and who they consider ‘suspicious’ are somewhat indescribable and related to internal instinct. While there are certain behaviour patterns that are searched for (for example, walking slowly and in a hunched manner, trashing, peeking over walls, looking nervous, trying to remain unseen) there is something that is described as a quality that only someone who is familiar with the local context can detect. Where physical descriptions of ‘the suspect’ are concerned, no one volunteered with a detailed description. However, the *NW* and police patrols that I was allowed to take part in, as well as the circulated pictures of ‘suspects’ made it very clear that ‘suspicious behaviour’ uncannily often overlaps with bodies that signify poverty – thin-looking, sometimes toothless, with ragged clothes, wrapping what is coded as a ‘Charly’ or ‘Bravo’ body³² (also see Seekings, 1996 and Jensen, 2006 on territorialized and racialized young, male bodies in Cape Town). The practice of categorizing and reporting of ‘suspicious’ bodies (often with the consequence of being encountered as such by patrollers, private security personal or the SAPS) and the circulation of

³² Substitute for the still prevailing racial category ‘Coloured’ in South Africa, indicating a cultural and racial ‘mix’ and in-between-ness

images of ‘suspects’ creates a collective memory or archive (see Appadurai, 2003). The constant confrontation with reports of ‘dodgy behaviour’ and images of ‘suspects’ lead to a continuous cultivation of suspicion. When reported in the WhatsApp chat group or via the radio, ‘suspects’ become ‘checked out’ by either Brett, other police officers he sends to the scene, Richard or the private security staff he supervises. Some patrollers confront ‘suspects’ and ask them what they are ‘up to’. In one instance, a suspicious black man was reported to roam the streets by a member in the WhatsApp group. Others tuned in, saying that he has been seen peering into houses. It was decided the man was ‘up to something’. This was when local news editor clarified that he had hired the young man from Mozambique to distribute the newspaper to houses. As if that was not enough to determine the man’s innocent occupation of the local street, Andre continued to vouch for the man’s sober habits to offer the group some relief. Shared, exchanged and individual ideas of what is out of the norm in a potentially threatening way impact on concrete bodily practices, strategies of being and the encountering of bodies within the suburb.

The different people I patrolled with during fieldwork had different foci of attention when monitoring the neighbourhood. On one patrol (his and my first on the 30.06.2015) Ethan spent most of his time looking for drugs hidden in flower beds, cracks of houses and drains after Luke made a comment that these constitute hiding spots for dealers. Others, like Ethan’s wife Christina, find it more important to establish their physical presence (wearing bibs and carrying two-way radios) and walking unified in what I would describe as a constantly held, medium pace. While Ethan was patiently checking an alleyway for hidden drugs, Christina had already marched ahead to the front of the group with her head high up and a stern look on her face. At times where personal conversation was minimal, some patrollers would start looking into cars for items that may lead to the smashing of windows. What follows then is the often fruitless search for the owner of the vehicle in order to express a warning and perhaps give a brief lecture on safety. There are yet other patrollers, who do not only report ‘suspicious’ individuals with a brief description in the main WhatsApp chat group for SAPS and the private security company of the area to respond to but who insist on approaching individuals and asking them what they are doing and why. The different foci of attention, ways of patrolling and conceptualising what is potentially dangerous or suspect can be seen as being tied to particular personalities, understandings of self and individual comfort zones.

While there are shared and differing concerns of who is a ‘suspect’ and how potential threats to the community should be encountered, the defining lines are not always clear. In Observatory and through attempts from individuals and sometimes groups to talk on behalf of those living much more precariously, those lines are particularly blurry, as the following section outlines.

5.3. Shades of being ‘suspicious’

Lock (1993) stated that the body is imbued with social meaning. The body is also historically situated and becomes not only a signifier of belonging and order, but also an active forum for the expression of dissent and loss. Thus, it ascribes individual agency. In looking at strategies of safety in Observatory, I found the bodies of the NW members and the NW itself as a social body to be ‘forums of expressions’ through which memories of the past and everyday experiences are interpreted and negotiated through notions of a ‘suspect’. In the search for the phantom suspect and the search for ‘suspicious’ behaviour and ways of negotiating space in the suburb lies a wish to belong in a context of order. Christina sees drug deals as a threat to individuals and the community as a whole because she has experienced the decline it can cause on many levels and has most likely seen other criminal behaviour that often goes hand-in-hand with drug deals. In the descriptions of her encounters with dealers she takes the upper hand and controls the situation. She keeps drug deals from happening and approaches dealers bravely. However, her ways of making the space she inhabits safe for her and her relationship with her husband and others come with worries and questions. The spatial segregation of ‘suspects’ (albeit frequently challenged in discussions) and the cultivation and embodiment of suspicion can be seen as forms of resistance to everyday, corporeal experiences of *precariousness* and attempts to generate notions of security and agency.

However, in the local context lines that seem easily drawn along economic markers of difference and interpreted in terms of belonging often become blurred by a conversationally promoted idea of shared humanness. Eugene for instance, frequently transgresses the code of conduct allowing to be part of a social group. He is known to most permanent residents by name and was described in the latest edition of *Obslife* (December 2015) as an elderly, mentally-ill Obs resident who lived on the streets without known relatives. I read several WhatsApp messages complaining about the man’s behaviour. The newspaper described him as a ‘fixture in Observatory, where he was well known for his often inappropriate attire, the mess he left on

local stoeps³³ and occasional fits of rage which were characterised by impressive cursing. He never hurt anyone' (*Obslife*, December 2015). This description (having met Eugene I found it quite fitting) was placed next to a print of a drawing of Eugene by a local artist, displayed in the local gallery. Eugene had a physical breakdown a few weeks before an article with the headline 'has anyone seen Eugene?' was published. The ONW WhatsApp community and other local forums of communication were abuzz with expressions of concern. Eugene, even if he does not 'fit' into societal structures is a generally accepted part of the community. His behaviour is rationalised by explaining it through a medical diagnosis, schizophrenia. Something renders Eugene different to other homeless people chased out of the area and sometimes beaten up.

The 63-year old with the long white beard, the bushy eyebrows and creased face, giving him a very characteristic expression, is a 'fixture', not an 'intruder' of the familiar and ideally safe. He has become a 'fixture' because someone at some stage explained the etiology of his behaviour he is unable to express and thus rendered it tolerable, even if this tolerance is accompanied by regular complaints. Communal voiceless-ness and the precarious lives some people in Obs live are thus not fixed stages but can become penetrable in both directions. Richard knows what it means to live in the streets. Christina only recently found herself in a position where she did not have access to her husband's bank account and her funds were exhausted. She used the last of her money to stay at a backpacker accommodation for a week until a new opportunity arose. 'But I have a friend who will let me sleep on her couch. It's just a bit complicated so I'd rather not...'. The social rules to recognitions of a life as such, as worth sheltering and protecting, depend on the context. In this suburb that is thought of as a niche for 'unusual' characters, there are always people who show themselves as forgiving when these rules are broken. To Richard, this means that his job is being rendered more difficult by those he calls 'liberals'. To Eugene, this meant a space that he could be without being forced back into the mental institution across the river where he is said to have come from before staying in Obs. For years, Observatory has been a space that he can inhabit without being forced out into a potentially more precarious life.

Thus far, I have focused on the cultivation of suspicion in general and its impact on bodies and being in the suburb. The following ethnographic example illustrates that patrolling and 'being suspicious' is not something learnt by simply reproducing a set of practices. In its immediate

³³ The commonly used Afrikaans way of spelling 'stoop' by speakers of different mother tongues.

corporeal experience, reactions are tied to individual notions of who and what constitutes a threat and become subject to negotiation. It also shows that observing the ways in which patrollers interpret threats and classify a situation as ‘suspicious’ should be interpreted as individual strategies to encounter rather particular vulnerabilities.

5.4. On patrol with Christina

Christina and I arranged to meet one night. After our last patrol together with Richard during which they both kept cutting each other’s stories short, Christina suggested that we meet alone so that we could talk. We met at the local ‘horse box’³⁴, a box on wheels in which a security guard is positioned. We started walking and chatting and I let her take the lead in choosing directions on both levels. Following her without having to think about where to go or what to discuss comforted me.

We drifted in and out of conversations about relationships and loneliness and she described how painful it is for her that Ethan, her husband, is at sea for months at a time. She asked me if I was seeing someone and I told her about a complicated romance that started a couple of months ago. She talked about her ex-husband and how he took pleasure in emotionally abusing her and keeping her self-esteem low, like her mother had done all her life. With Ethan, she explained, it is the first time in her life that she feels good about herself. She believes him when he says that she is beautiful the way she is. He makes her feel good about her curves and curls, which she has spent more than 60 years hiding and wishing for her sister’s genetic composition. Her ex-husband had cheated on her with her friend, who she had always seen as a better version of herself. She is active and skinny like Christina was at some point as well. When she found out about the affair, her ex-husband somehow managed to make her feel like it was her fault. I was absorbed in the story and hardly noticed where I was walking. Only occasionally my gaze shifted from her face to our surroundings, making sure I was not running into anything or crossing the street without checking for cars. I felt my muscles getting tense and relaxing in flow with this extract of her life story and the drama of it becoming a part of my body.

³⁴ The presence of the horse box and the guard are meant to keep the crime in the immediate area down, which is why its position is changed regularly. Similarly to issues of visibility through bibs and walkie-talkies, the strategizing behind the box was questioned in the Security Council meeting, arguing that visible strategies give criminals the opportunity to plan committing crimes a few streets further. This would be prevented by more under-cover work, which is sometimes done by the police in the area.

We walked all the way down to the railway lines and entered a badly lit, empty. All of a sudden, Christina stopped and looked at a car in front of us, commenting that it looked dodgy. The lights of the car were on with the engine running calmly. One of the headlights was not working. 'Reporting a dodgy car in Florence Avenue. People are just sitting in the car, possibly waiting for a drug deal to happen', Christina announces into her walkie-talkie. The response is a short, scratchy sounding recognition of the report from the local security, without the promise of coming and checking out the situation. When we walked towards the car it started moving. After approximately ten metres it stopped again. My heart started pounding and I looked at Christina in search for advice. Instead of having a ready strategy, as I had hoped, she met my gaze with a helpless look on her face. Eventually the car started moving again and disappeared around the corner. Just as we began to converse again, we heard a car behind us again and turned around. It was the same dark station wagon with a broken headlight. Christina and I exchanged a quick look and, without saying a word, started walking fast without actually running. Before we turned around the corner she asked: 'Is it following us?' I replied 'no'. After checking a few more times as subtly as possible, we slowed our pace. Christina informed Brett via WhatsApp as we walked back up Station Road. By the time we reached Observatory's night life and busier streets, the excitement seemed almost forgotten to me, leaving only a soft, almost unnoticeable tingling in my body. The experience was intense and revealed to me how emotionally complex and challenging patrolling the neighbourhood can be. It also made me think about how the action of patrolling can bind bodies through the process of walking, sharing and caring.

Looking at descriptions and images in the chat groups, there seems to be a rough, shared idea of what is 'suspicious', serving as common denominator and social glue of the ONW. What is more, a 'phantom suspect' justifies practices of social fingerprinting in the neighbourhood and the exclusion of people from the area, often without evidence for any legal misconduct. However, individual concerns and past experiences mean that what patrollers recognise as 'dodgy' will vary. I would most likely have simply walked past the car Christina considered to be suspicious and would have continued with our conversation, figuring that the people in the car are picking someone up from the house. I would have interpreted the running engine and lights to be a positive sign as it means the group of people (we could not see exactly how many there were and what they looked like) are not trying to noiselessly hide in the dark. Christina's immediate thought was that there must be a drug deal in progress, with her experiences and conceptualisation of drug dealers as a particular kind of criminal leading the way for her bodily

reaction to this encounter. I experienced the situation as surreal but was quickly swept up in Christina's reaction to a situation that she classified as dangerous and suspicious. On our way back, she apologised for bringing me into a hazardous situation and suggested that, next time, we should bring a man along to patrol with. Christina *knows* what 'suspicious' behaviour looks like, at least in the context of Observatory; there is no hesitation in sensing that she has found herself confronted with something 'dodgy'. She also has an idea of what a patroller has to do. Her big wind jacket, her quick deciding of what routes to take, the confident way she holds herself and works her two-way radio communicated to me that Christina knows herself as a patroller well enough to always keep control of the situation. When Christina felt uncertain in her role as a patroller and we found ourselves in the position of being the ones who are potentially assailed, it became clear that no protocol or strategy solves the issue of feeling vulnerable to a particular kind of crime. Control goes hand-in-hand with the potential loss of it. Patrolling the neighbourhood, individually and as a group, may generate a feeling of comfort, increased security and belonging but also carries the risk of being confronted with what makes one scared, triggering episodes of experienced insecurity along the way. During the experience, Christina's way of gaining control of her insecurities by occupying the space as a patroller of the ONW was disturbed and so was her strategy of an encounter involving distinct categories of 'bad guys' vs. patrollers. Christina's experience shows that it is important to look at practices of patrolling and framing 'suspects' not as something that is found and figured out as a fix to vulnerability once and continuously practiced in the same ways but something that is subjected to shifts and turns as much as a person's lived history.

5.5. Conflicting translations of trust and suspicion onto bodies and selves

According to Baier (1986:234), 'Criminals have been the experts at discerning different forms of trust'. In Observatory, counter-strategies to the vulnerability of crime and *precariousness* rely on the idea of a morally corrupt 'suspect' and practices of excluding anyone who resembles the phantom criminal. In the face of *precarity* (Butler, 2008), experienced on an immediate level through particular encounters and through a deeply socially embedded distrust in state institutions, a general cultivation of trust seems to equal the direct playing into criminal hands. However, at the same time that that suspicion becomes cultivated and an embodied practice, new reliance's within the suburb are established and nourished through a frequent communication on different levels. What is more, suspicion may be cultivated through the

organisation, individually embodied and translated into practices of patrolling, but can cause conflicting reactions.

Christina, for instance, tends to get herself into dangerous situations. Her interference with the drug trade makes her worry that the dealers will one day come ‘after her’. The only form of protection patrollers have is the contact of the police, which is known to arrive on crime scenes late or never. The other and potentially quicker possibility is to communicate through the WhatsApp group and ask other patrollers for backup. There is a handful of patrollers who are likely to join up speedily. The lack of protection does not keep Christina from entering similarly dangerous situations repeatedly. In the first conversation we had during my first patrol (30.06.2015), she told me about a situation in which she was attacked by a man in an alleyway in the City Centre. The man put a knife to her throat and asked for her phone. She started screaming and swearing at him furiously. The realisation of how dangerous the situation and how risky her reaction to it was only came to her mind much later, she said, adding that she is worried about reacting like this again and getting herself ‘killed over nothing’ one day. ‘I don’t know’, she exclaims with a concerned laugh, ‘I don’t seem to be able to control myself sometimes!’ Christina gets involved in situations in which she positions herself as a moral safeguard, especially with regards to drugs and appearances and experiences she associates with them. At the same time, she says, she just wants to enjoy her new attempt to live with Ethan; and is determined to take better care of herself. ‘I have to remind myself sometimes how much losing me would hurt him’, she comments over a coffee at one of the local backpackers, in which she was staying temporarily (field notes from 30.10.2015).

The impacts of trust and suspicion onto corporealities can become visible through risky behaviour as in Christina’s case, but also in many other ways. Brett for instance, has to embody different roles at the same time. As a police officer and sector leader of the neighbourhood, he has to be tough and decisive. His identity is tied to his uniform with his Facebook pictures and WhatsApp profile images never failing to portray him without it. Additionally, his gun is often visible and he never smiles. In some pictures he is staging an arrest and covers the faces of the arrested with images of lollipops or cartoon aliens. At the same time, Brett shows his ‘soft side’ showing a great interest in pleasing the community and protecting abused animals. This became clear not only through his Facebook posts but also through his fast reactions when confronted with neglected or dumped animals. When a woman left kittens at different intersections, Brett expressed his anger in the forum and updated the community that a case had been opened and that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) had been involved. He

explained, during another conversation, that his job makes him happy as he cares about the community and does not mind showing it. A number of the frequently changing WhatsApp profile pictures show him with his partner Adam. I think that he has found a niche both in Observatory and with his partner to cultivate the side of the caring police officer he likes to emphasise in the community.

There are different ways of embodying the suspicion and being a patroller in Observatory. I felt myself getting sucked into emotions, reactions and dynamics throughout patrols, depending on my company and their reactions to a particular situation. Some patrollers, like Paul (previously introduced as the ‘gun nut’) prefer to patrol quietly alone and feed concise information back to the rest of the group (short description of the person and situation, followed by the location and written in half-sentences). Others patrol to establish relationships, like Amber, or to emphasize a certain side or image of themselves, like Richard. Some ‘couch-patrollers’ share many of their everyday concerns in the chat groups and are sometimes asked to ‘keep information relevant’, usually by chair and administrative person Luke. Another part of the group dynamic constitutes the reporting-back of the physical handling of ‘suspicious’ bodies by Brett and Richard. When arrests are announced by Brett the group chat thread show expressions of support and encouragement, given extra emphasis with icons such as thumbs-up or fireworks. Individual practices of patrolling the neighbourhood are different but the constant exchange of perceived vulnerability and images of ‘suspects’ become part of a shared, public memory (see Appadurai, 2003) and manifest in notions of the ‘phantom-suspect’ and the encounters of bodies in the neighbourhood. Understandings of the self as a protector of the neighbourhood become re-negotiated in encounters within the community as what ones wants and feels one should embody are not always in harmony. The cultivation of a shared notion of a ‘suspect’ (even though the kinds of ‘suspicious’ behaviour expected are different amongst the patrollers) encourages the production of a self that carries the power of successfully defeating it. It also encourages the reproduction of a social space in which spatial segregation along economic lines (more often than not overlapping with racial lines) prevails, whilst the same are continuously ideologically challenged and discussed by members of the community.

5.6. Conclusion

Looking for ‘suspects’, as the task of a group, requires a shared understanding of the cultural space and a shared notion of what constitutes a threat to it. Patrolling within the geographic

borders of the quaint little suburb presupposes the idea of a threat to people inhabiting the place. This threat can then be spotted, identified and removed. The cultivated ‘suspect’ thus contributes to the maintaining and reproducing of spatial divisions, intersecting with racial categories and categories of social class and wealth. The ways in which suspicion and conceptualisations of a ‘suspect’ turns into embodied practices in the neighbourhood vary, depending on individual worries or social competences but they do foreground a common knowledge of who belongs in this social space and who does not. This knowledge is something that is tied to Observatory as a distinct ideological space, which is embodied in group dynamics as well as individual life histories.

The argument made through my ethnographic descriptions is threefold. Firstly, who and what is considered ‘suspect’ is tied up in group dynamics, generating a notion of safety in patrolling together or exchanging information in the different social forums. This I showed using the experience of my first patrol in which my body became part of a movement around me that was inspired by suspicion – something that I had not anticipated or felt in control of. While there is a shared notion the abstracted ‘suspect’ that everyone is looking for, there are different individual foci of attention when scanning the neighbourhood for this phantom. Both, the shared component of suspicion and the one framed by individual past experiences impact on bodies and ways of moving through the space.

Secondly, I argue that there is a suspicious grey zone or space for negotiation when it comes to deciding who the suspect is or if one fits the general understanding of the suspect and can still be helped in some way. In Observatory, as a distinct cultural space, there is often at least one advocate to be found who takes it upon him or herself to turn a tragic life story into a case where community support may allow for a less precarious way of being. Eugene (see above) serves as an example of how acceptance and the interpretation of ‘inappropriate’ behaviour can lead to the creation of niche within the suburb in which one can exist without ‘fitting in’ or always adhering to the social conduct.

Lastly, I argue that in situations where individual patrollers are confronted with people classified by them as ‘suspects’, the quick decision-making required in the moment may interfere with neatly constructed ideas of right and wrong between ‘suspect’ and ‘patroller’. This was outlined through my shared experience with Christina, in which her past suddenly started chasing her in the literal sense of a car that she thought was occupied by drug dealers who were after us. Without an encounter, the ways in which she holds herself as a patroller and

embodies suspicion give her a sense of agency and control. However, as the experience described above shows, this sense of agency can also be rendered fragile during patrols. In the situation she had momentarily lost control. She did not know what to do and panicked. It was only after we both walked away and realized that we were not being followed that she calmed down and re-composed herself. As a way of confronting her past of addiction and involvements with dealers and users, the practice of looking for ‘suspects’ thus also bears the risk of triggering the opposite of security and agency – a notion of being vulnerable and at risk of losing control.

Who and what is suspicious, and in what context is thus both decided based on a shared notion of the ‘phantom suspect’ and is individually interpreted. There are niches and grey zones that can cause a turn from the hunt to the sheltering of a person in the suburb. Even in the context where there is at least one advocate for an individual’s justice and humanity, suspicion can still become part of the body, being and sense of self. Conflicts within that, not only between idealised notions of space and perceived *precariousness* but also ways of unfolding selves are multiple. Working the scale between being tough and protective and being trusting are hard to work. Observatory, as a space seems to allow for plural ways of being and offers room for manoeuvring this scale.

In this chapter I have outlined the ways in which individuals gain control over a sense of vulnerability to crime by cultivating particular notions of a ‘suspect’ that becomes, to some degree, subject to individual re-interpretation in relation to an interpretation of self as a patroller of the neighbourhood. In the next chapter I look at patrolling as a practice and as a performance, through which roles of the self can be constructed in relation to other people and understandings of crime, assault as well as protection.

Chapter 6 - Dancing with the devil: patrolling as performance

Abstract:

The previous chapter grappled with the ways in which ‘the suspect’ is conceptualised in Observatory both individually and as a group. This chapter outlines the ONW as a space to re-claim agency through performance. I look at how ‘the patroller’ is understood and embodied in his (or her) encounter with the culturally cultivated ‘suspect’. I argue that performing constitutes an essential strategy in dealing with notions of vulnerability to crime. The embodiment of particular characters and routine practices offers the opportunity to feel more secure and manoeuvre through what is experienced as social minefields with ‘suspects’ being up to ‘no good’. The embodied skills and habits described in the previous chapter are also tied to power relationships in the suburb, the technologies of which diffuse onto bodies and the ways in which the patrollers understand their places in the world (their notion of subjectivity).

6.0. Introduction

As shown in the previous chapter, being a patroller and the practices it incorporates are learnt, cultivated and embodied. The particular practices and mannerisms that become part of a bodily understanding of a life-world considered dangerous and threatening results from a process of inventing culture and a making of the self (see Turner, 1985:178 on performativity), finding their firm roots in engagements with the past and aspiring for agency. Patrols offer an example of strategic, intentional actions contingent upon constraining structures that deny people in the suburb (and beyond) a sense of safety and security. In the context of the ONW, these structures are symbolically embodied by the ‘suspect’. The ways in which he is encountered and dealt with and the continuous re-balancing of power relationships in the suburb are of essence in understanding the self as less vulnerable to crime and thus as less precarious by being part of a social network that aims to counteract crime. Clifford (1988) establishes that self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than essence. Put differently, relationships are acted out and made through performance. Or yet in *other* words: ‘all the world’s a stage’, which Goffman (1978) considers to be the case for the world of social interaction, filled with routinized acts. This means that, to some degree, interactions can be considered acts or performances. The ways of embodying and performing ‘the patroller’ and understandings of ‘the suspect’ both near and far, in talk and in action and as a building stone for different relationships within different social spheres reveals much about the types of relationships that

become possible between different bodies in Observatory. This also depends on the kinds of power that some bodies can assert over others. The following ethnographic data illustrates how patrolling the neighbourhood becomes part of a performance with its actors being entangled in - and manoeuvring their positionality through local webs of power. I interrogate how understandings of the 'self' become negotiated in the role of 'the patroller' in the suburb and tease out the ways in which embodied characters can serve as 'technologies of self' (Foucault, 1978) in challenging the social order. This will become clear through the spaces that are created to develop the self within the framework of the ONW as well as through the differently exercised powers and agencies within the suburb.

6.1. 'I'm no superman!'

Excerpt from field notes, 08.09.2015

Upon locking my bicycle and entering the Obsid building around 4pm on a windy afternoon and climbing up a narrow flight of stairs, I greeted the receptionist in passing and aimed towards Richard, who was now standing up in preparation to greet me. Instead of giving me a hug as he usually does, he patted my shoulder and steered me towards the big conference table, half covered by piles of papers and various communication devices. Richard is always a little different with me at the office and seemed tense today. He paced back and forth and his voice was professional.

After we sat down with our coffees that he had prepared, Richard told me about a case where he found an extremely drugged man sleeping in another person's car, finding it a convenient and secure place to rest. Richard reported proudly to have beaten the man up and produced a picture of a disoriented and scared looking young man. The captured expression of the man was so deeply disturbing and saddening to me that I found myself unable to swallow the sip of coffee I had just taken or to speak for quite a few seconds after forcing it down. I believe in response to my expression Richard exclaimed unhappily: 'I can't be everybody's superman!'.... 'At least my method works and I don't just talk about stuff!', he exclaims. [End of field notes].

Richard in particular feels he is confronted with too many conflicting and, in his opinion, unrealistic expectations as a manager of security issues in the neighbourhood. He finds a certain militaristic and uncompromising character to be the most fitting to deal with the different local characters and structures he has to take into consideration in developing strategies against crime (he deals with people at the *Obsid*, supervises the private security personnel and is recipient of complaints from private citizens). When I enquired about his well-being after not having seen him for a couple of weeks he said ‘My job is to be busy all the time. But don’t worry about me – I’m a survivor!’ Richard finds a direct confrontation through patrolling the neighbourhood to be strategically essential. During the patrols with him, he approached many ‘suspects’ and asked what they were up to and where they were staying. ‘I want them to know my face and that I’m watching out for them!’, he said. His perceived responsibility for the community and the stress of having a temporary work contract at the time (it was eventually extended after a committee reviewed his work performance) impacted on how he embodied the role of the ‘patroller’ and were very much tied to his understandings of what it means to be a man carrying the responsibility to protect.

‘As long as I am in the neighbourhood, you don’t have to worry’, he once said to me. In one or another way, all the members embody their understanding of a ‘patroller’ differently – Christina, for instance, physically interferes with the drug trade, while the young fathers usually reduce their tasks to strict observing-and-reporting policy and often curb Christina’s enthusiasm for following and catching ‘suspects’ in the criminal act. On one late Tuesday evening patrol and upon seeing a man carrying a big black garbage bag containing something, Christina excitedly asked what the man could possibly be carrying and where to. The question was rhetorical but her desire to follow the man and find out for herself was tangible. Luke replied ‘It could be anything. I don’t find that suspicious.’ The rest of the group seemed in agreement and we continued walking along the otherwise empty street. John patrols rarely and in different constellations. For him, patrols are meant to keep the neighbourhood together and ensure that communication is working on all levels. When he invited me for a patrol on the 26th of October 2015 with a group of men I had not met yet, John made sure that conversations were in a constant flow. As the ‘father’ of the ONW he is the orientation point and guide when it comes to improving communal relationships and interactions. Perhaps, because I spent many hours with him and because of his role as a security manager who encounters people in the suburb as well as ‘suspects’ in various contexts, I found the ways in which Richard embodies and performs the ‘patroller’ and communicates safety rather revealing. His and Christina’s focus in

patrolling and their particular engagements with certain strategies of spatial exclusion (and topics of homelessness and drug addiction) show that suspicion and ideas of ‘the suspect’ can serve as a moral counter-figure to the self and are not the result of a clear-cut, black-and-white notion of right versus wrong or good versus evil. Instead, suspicion is not only cultivated and embodied but also becomes part of a performance. Here, notions of ‘good patroller’ vary and change in the same way that notions of the ‘self’ change - in varying contexts and through different encounters. Notions of ‘the suspect’ as propagated through descriptions and pictures in the cyber groups become not only abstracted but, in actual encounters, they might also mirror the self in certain ways.

In patrolling and communicating the physical defence one’s social status and sense of control over the area as a group, categorisations of the ‘suspect’ have to be rigorous and not allow for expressions of doubt. The performed ‘patroller’ thus has to be of a certain conviction and able to convey a readiness to make fast gut-decisions. Or as John states: ‘You just know when someone is up to no good’. As *habitus*, these ways of seeing the world become subtly and subconsciously internalized (see Bourdieu 1990) and embodied. However, they also become challenged through reconceptualisations of self in the role of ‘the patroller’ of the neighbourhood. ‘The patroller’ is a cultural fabrication but is all but static and uniform in encountering ‘the suspect’, as the following ethnographic example illustrates.

6.2. Patrolling with Richard

Excerpt from field notes, 15.10.2015

[...] Richard and I were walking up Station Road, approaching the Main Road. Along the way he explained, as he usually does when we reach this point, that there is a camera installed right in front of the church and that he wants to move it. ‘It is pointless’, he says, as the area is too dark for the footage to be examined. As he frequently does, he started giving me a local crime tour, outlining a number of crime strategies [that] he knows and explains that the kind of crime in Obs differs from the district he has previously worked in (another suburb called Kenilworth) in that it is more opportunistic and encouraged by the circumstance that the rights of criminals are regarded to be on the same level as the ones of the victims or even levelled

higher, as the victim's rights becomes essentially neglected in acknowledging the humanity of the inhumane.

We kept returning to the topic of relationships and he tells me about him often feeling lonely and thus being glad he has such a busy job. We were in the middle of such a conversation when Richard suddenly started to determinedly walk straight up to what is referred to in the groups as a 'bin scratcher' or 'bin miner' (someone who looks for food and other items in garbage bins). After his stories of beating up homeless people in the early morning hours so as to rob them of the deepest, most recovering part of their sleep, I expected a loud and perhaps physical confrontation. Instead, I heard a soft, gentle-sounding voice escaping his short but neat and angular presence before he returned to me, pulled up his high-sitting and too-short jeans on his belt with a satisfied nod. 'He said he will clean after himself', he said in a manner suggesting this was the concluding comment on the topic and we continue walking and chatting about his daily routines. [End of field notes].

This experience made it clear to me that understandings of the persona of the patroller vary and are in a constant flux depending on the particular context. It becomes evident that evaluations of what or who is 'suspect' tend to seem straightforward. Had Richard felt under pressure to perform as the security manager when we encountered the 'bin miner' during our casual conversation, Richard may have been more 'in character' and approached the man, hunched over the bin standing somewhat abandoned in the street late at night, in the firm voice that I previously heard him using when approaching the socially unwanted of the area. Richard has referred to himself as a 'sheriff' before whose main task is to protect the area from what some people in the chat group call 'no-gooders'. as the fact that I felt that my fixed notions of what Richard's static concept of a 'suspect' and intolerable behaviour was altered through the encounter with the 'bin miner' and his ability to relate to the man's desperation in a direct encounter, led me to a further questioning of what 'suspicion' is and how it is processed.

The ONW constitutes a particularly-made and invented culture (see Turner, 1985), encouraging an idea of a self that refuses to be diminished by crime. The persona of 'the patroller' is constructed in opposition to 'the suspect' and helps channel a fear of crime that motivates more and more people to join the group (even though they are only present in a virtual form).

Cultivating, embodying and performing the role of ‘the patroller’ as a group of people encourages the fabrication, invention, imagination and construction of a particular texture of human realities around the members that accelerate a sense of being in control of one’s environment.

At the same time, I found the different characters within the organization to be re-interpreting their role within the group and the suburb, often somewhat reflecting the challenges and struggles that reoccur in their life stories. I remember the agitation with which Christina told me about a conversation with a young woman who spends most of her time in the local streets and is associated with drugs and prostitution. When the young woman asked Christina, why she has to follow her around and make her life difficult by calling the police on her all the time, Christina replied ‘because I don’t want to see your miserable face!’ It took a few seconds to process the violence of her tone but by the time I had, Christina elaborated further and explained that she finds it painful to see lives wasting away to drugs like hers was a few years earlier. Christina’s anxieties are around a particular type of crime and being exposed to it is not only a challenging reminder of her past but also a way of encouraging the part of herself that is done with a life directed by an addiction to drugs.

This section has sought to emphasise that being a patroller is a kind of performance, one that has to be reconceptualised along with notions of self within the ONW as a particular institutional framework. The following section outlines patrolling as a performance.

6.3. Playing cat-and-mouse

Patrolling and the different motivations for playing ‘cat-and-mouse’ often reveal the ambiguities of everyday performance in the suburb. The rules and broad guidelines of the task of ‘finding the suspect’ are discussed in different forums - but are largely accepted and reproduced in action. Thus, cultivated and internalized notions of the ‘suspect’ and the embodied practices tied to this phantom being (such as patrolling and circulating a particular kind of crime-knowledge) can be argued to reproduce social structures to some extent. This also becomes clear through the interconnectedness of SAPS and the ONW, with the latter, to some degree, taking over the role of state. The information and cell-phone-snapshots of ‘suspects’ that are circulated via WhatsApp and Google are accessed and responded to by Constable Brett on a daily basis, who then either decides to send another police vehicle - or to adhere to the situation himself if he is available. His responses in the group are usually quick

and enthusiastic and his work is responded to with cheering and many encouraging symbols in the WhatsApp chat groups (such as hands clapping together or fireworks).

Observing Constable Brett Nile on patrol on the 6th of November 2015 made it clear to me just how routinized his part is in the social play of ‘dealing with suspects’ that is the aftermath of the reporting done by the ONW members. I expected drama, sirens and much resistance. However, what I witnessed was sobering and different. The men stopped by the young and sturdily-built Brett and his middle-aged and slender colleague Adam calmly addressed the ‘suspects’ they had stopped in Afrikaans and asked if they could search them. Indeed, they seemed rather familiar with the procedure and largely produced their contents of the backpacks without their facial expressions revealing any drastic emotional shifts. A couple of men, stopped in a small alleyway, underwent the procedure wordlessly. Upon request, the content of the backpacks was produced and even the foil-wrapped food was examined. Shoes and caps came off before they were inspected closely and carefully (as they are popular hiding places for drugs, Brett explained). Pockets were checked just as exhaustively. The procedure was followed by a thorough tapping down of the bodies themselves. Without exchanging any unnecessary words, judging by how rarely they were outspoken, the men were left to continue walking.

The routine procedures and friendly greetings of local characters that would likely be framed as ‘suspicious’ by ONW patrollers in the chat groups seemed like a well-known and often-rehearsed dance. This part of the dance with the ‘suspect’ in which abstract ideas of the ‘suspect’ and particular bodies turn into tangible experience of ‘suspects’ being physically confronted by officers (representing the state) render the routinized and embodied quality of policing the neighbourhood clear. My first police patrol also made it apparent that the practice of observing and reporting at a distance (or virtually) opens up spaces in which the ‘suspect’ can remain abstract and a not very persistently challenged entity. A direct confrontation with the ‘suspect’, however, requires a particular kind of embodiment of suspicion. As a performance, a way of being and negotiating space on the social ‘world-stage’ (Goffman 1978), the role of the policeman is just as negotiated as that of any other patroller or patroller of the neighbourhood. Brett’s calmness and focus on routine strategies (‘like searching suspects’) is contrasted with images on his Facebook page, showing him almost exclusively in uniform with his gun and posing with ‘suspects’ upon their arrest (at least that is what the images suggest). The poses tease out the power imbalances between portrayed characters. The arrested individuals, as mentioned before, are often shown handcuffed with their faces covered, lawfully rendering them difficult to identify but also stripping them of their humanness by literally degrading the

dark-skinned young men to objects. Power is portrayed in dichotomies – there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forces. The lack of ambiguity here is not in line with the everyday encounters I witnessed and in which relationships have to be more carefully negotiated through particular practices and strategies. For instance, some ‘suspects’ are simultaneously police informants, greeted with a fist-bump by the officers and joked around with. A young, nervous-looking young man that I had previously seen along the Main Roads of the suburbs was stopped to see if he could perform one of his magic tricks for my benefit. When Brett asked him to show me one of his performances, already known by my armed and uniformed companions, the young man seemed relieved and immediately started speedily moving the cards in his hands and instructing Brett to pick one, his voice suddenly more confident. The chosen card was re-produced to us after many rapid and skilled hand movements. I expressed my surprise and appreciation for the entertaining act.

In the cat-and-mouse game played in the neighbourhood between opportunists looking for quick money and opportunists of the ONW looking for criminal activity (ranging from illegal car-guarding to robberies and physical attacks) - performances and routinized acts feed off each other and develop accordingly. They form a symbiosis that, in face-to-face encounters, sometimes struck me as a surprisingly smooth social dance in which the partners steps are somewhat mirrored but in which it is not always clear who is leading the part. New strategies of security and surveillance initiatives often lead to the development of new skills to disable these strategies. As Richard stated with regards to the broken fence along the railway line that has been reported to serve as an escape route after robberies and other criminal activities (*Obslife* and conversations in meetings): ‘The hole must be closed, – even if they make another one tomorrow’. Due to the flexibility and creativity of people committing crime, security strategies discussed at the Security Council meetings were agreed to therefore require flexibility, with mobile cameras and unpredictable patterns on behalf of private security and SAPS forming a part of them. (It is also considered general knowledge in the suburb that predictable behaviour patterns render a person more prone to having one’s house or car broken into).

While dramatic encounters are appreciated and rewarded with attention by an audience of ‘couch-patrollers’ with plenty of praises, the few individuals who actually do encounter ‘suspects’ on a face-to-face level seem to follow familiar steps in performing their particular roles than to provoke an aggressive confrontation in which power-imbued roles may become compromised. Robberies in the street and in homes, the ready use of weapons as tools of

intimidation, challenging the very notion bodily existence of a person, are out-of-line with what are aspired to be ‘normal’ social structures in the suburb. The imagined ordinariness seems to ideologically require a spatial exclusion of particular kinds of bodies for others to thrive. Yet, the continuous challenge between the two camps, both somehow working towards less *precariousness* in their lives, leaves the audience insecure about the future.

This part of the chapter has elaborated on the aspect of playing cat-and-mouse in patrolling and the kinds of performances the social role-play accounts for. Chapter 2 has already shown that there are shared and individually negotiated notions of the ‘suspect’. In performing ‘the patroller’, roles and symbols of manhood and superiority as well as simplified ideas of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are encouraged but become negotiated more carefully in actual encounters. The following section addresses performing ‘the patroller’ as a *technology of self* (Foucault, 1988).

6.4. The performed patroller as *technology of self*

The performance of the culturally fabricated ‘suspect’ and ‘patroller’, I argue, offer a space for agency and imagination. Such performances ‘holdout the promise of reimagining and refashioning the world’, to borrow Conquergood’s words (1989:83). In a world refashioned through performance, anxieties can be eased and being in a space is informed by a positive quality. Being a patroller of the suburb (virtually or physically) can be considered part of a cultural performance with what Foucault (1988) has coined as a *technologies of self*, impacting on the body-self, which then becomes re-interpreted in the process.

Technologies of the self (Foucault 1988) permit individuals to impact on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, perfection or purity. Understanding one’s role as a patroller and transforming oneself within the role can be interpreted as a technique to create a particular ‘truth’. The ways in which Brett and Richard embody their roles in the community in particular and yet context-specific ways illustrate this. Both men hold positions in which they are expected to protect the suburb and the people within it. They are equipped with certain powers – Richard’s interpretations form a part of the development of local security strategies (thus he is present in all local meetings that are concerned with these). Brett, as a state police officer, holds the power to arrest and thus physically restrict people’s freedom to move. Richard decided to undergo a training as a peace officer (and so did Peter, the ‘gun nut’) that would equip him with the power to write tickets and search people. Even so, where both, Richard and Brett are

concerned, the expectations they are confronted with seem out of proportion to the means they have accessible to strategize against criminal activity. Brett's uniform, gun and position as the manager of all police operations in the area indicate power – a power that Richard would like to have access to in order to survey the area more effectively. The evening course, preparing them to be peace officers with certain social powers, can be interpreted as a *technology of self* through which a particular kind of truth can be moulded through the occupation and performance of the role of a powerful patroller. One advantage of becoming a peace officer is being allowed to wear firearms without having to defend oneself in front of the part of the community that is strongly opposed to them as a means to control movement in the area. The powers Richard and others will be given are not only a reward for their continuous efforts to physically patrol and scan the neighbourhood (while the credit of making the neighbourhood safe often is given to Brett) but enables them to positively impact on their ways of being and feeling good in their role as patrollers.

As a local reference point to the state's responsibility to distribute safety and security, Brett finds himself in the position of having to regain the trust in the state and its role as a protector. He does so somewhat successfully and the renewed relationships and communication between the police and locals (through ONW channels) were recently celebrated in the local news (*Obslife*, November 2015). Brett and his partner, Constable Joffrey, told be about the humiliations and physical strains they had to undergo in their preparation to become a part of the SAPS. The withholding of food and social contact and being forced to stay in the same position without moving for hours formed part of the disciplining of their bodies. Brett also explained that at the police station, there are strong racial divisions with 'black' officers staying amongst themselves. With all this tension of negotiating his positionality as a white, Afrikaans speaking man the local celebrations of his work encourage his ways of manoeuvring the matrix of expectations spun around his role as a police Constable. Brett tries to be a version of himself that he feels comfortable with and that is in line with both, the meanings of being a policeman in the station and amongst his colleagues and acquaintances as well as Observatory as the place he is responsible for.

Foucault (1988) describes *technologies of self* as emerging from a negotiation with the 'moral codes' around a person and their reaction to them. In the context of Observatory, *technologies of self*, serve to transform and re-construct oneself within power relations that prevail in the

suburb and lead to particular trends in institutional decision-making and impact on the ways in which people interact. The persona of the ‘patroller’ is thus not only cultivated, embodied and performed as an organizational requirement, generating a notion of agency. The performed patroller becomes, as argued in the previous section, negotiated in the process. What is more, negotiations of self through acquired skills and attitudes can be seen as techniques to renew or transform oneself. In the discussions and social exchanges that take place within the suburb and the ONW in particular and through attempts to find oneself between coded practices and bodily negotiations of space, *technologies of self* (Foucault, 1988) emerge and transform the self in ways that create room for happiness or satisfaction within a rather constant perceived state of *precariousness* and vulnerability.

This section has shown that patrolling and performing the ‘patroller’ demand the development of particular skills and attitudes. Those skills and construction of realities or ‘truths’ may not be the same for everyone but they enable the being on this local ‘social stage’ (Goffman 1978) in the best way individually possible. People in the suburb act upon themselves and somewhat transform themselves for the sake of a better way of being in the space and by grappling with local ‘moral codes’ and relationships of power.

6.5. Conclusion

Being a patroller of the suburb (virtually or physically) is part of a performance and serves as a *technology of self*. The social spaces that the ONW provides offers an opportunity to make and invent a certain cultural sphere and self within it (see Turner, 1985 on cultural performance). Being a patroller and being able to have a concrete and recorded impact on one’s surroundings offers a feeling of security and eases notions of vulnerability to crime. Through its cultivation, embodiment and performance, the role of the patroller helps to fabricate, invent, imagine and construct a texture of human realities with increased notions of agency and the idea of being related to the ONW absorbs the feeling of living *precariously* to some degree - previously infused into individual lives through a fear of crime.

As performers, members of the ONW are playing with the social order. As Conquergood (1998:83) stated ‘As soon as a world has been made, lines drawn, categories defined, hierarchies erected, then the trickster, the archetypical performer, moves in to breach norms, violate taboos, turn everything upside down’. Impotence and powerlessness experienced through crime (in combination with an awareness of the vulnerability of state institutions)

becomes counter-balanced through the organisation with the idea that patrolling as a particular persona carries the potential to restore the social order. Different ways of processing cultivated and embodied suspicion thus leads to an actual and continuous deconstruction and re-construction of social space and ways of being in Observatory.

The 'patroller' is part of a role-play and thus cannot exist without a constructed 'suspect' and notion of *precariousness*. The skills and attitudes that are tied to the role, mirror the suspect, who is also a mirror of one's fears. Being homeless was a period of his life when Richard had to give up all control and could not even see his son. In the particular role Richard has created for himself as a patroller, he can actively challenge his fears and feel empowered. Brett as well challenges his insecurities by performing a particular idea of masculinity. For both, him and Brett, clear and unambiguous constructions of 'suspects' are, however, difficult to hold up rigorously in everyday encounters and thus have to be reinterpreted along with understandings of their own roles and understandings of being patrollers of the neighbourhood. While both of them have developed skills sets that enable them to combat crime, largely through the performance of a certain form of masculinity, they are also forced to face the reality and humanity of 'suspects' in face-to-face encounters. In engaging with 'suspects' directly, it is not guns that speak a clear language but a calm and often routinized way of negotiating space and roles within it.

Chapter 7 - ‘Couch patrolling’ and the virtual embodiment of the Observatory Neighbourhood Watch

Abstract:

The previous chapters sought to clarify what it is that people in the suburb are worried about, what they consider ‘suspicious’ and how they patrol the neighbourhood. In this chapter, I engage with different virtual ways of patrolling via chat groups - something Christina has coined as ‘couch-patrolling’. The social media forums used as communication channels and the ways in which bodies are told and acted out through them will be central to this analysis. The stories folded into the ‘body told’ in the Facebook, Google and WhatsApp chat groups are indicative of a local social fabric that is a product of particular ways of understanding virtual bodies - and of relating them to physical bodies. The central argument is that, in practices of cyber policing or ‘couch-patrolling’, the ‘suspect’ becomes a written category and therefore, a reality. The virtually modified ‘suspect’ is subject to what can be framed as suburban ‘internet localisation’, positing not a ‘local community’ being impacted upon by global networks but by variously positioned agents and agencies in an exclusive virtual sphere.

7.0. Introduction

The idea of the local neighbourhood watch is, in essence - as interviews and meetings have suggested - a social space within which community spirits ought to be lifted. Hollywood clichés of a suburbia where everybody knows their neighbour and can rely on their support may come close to what members of the ONW are attempting to facilitate. However, in Observatory, neighbours coming together as a supportive extension of one’s body in a precarious situation cannot be taken for granted. The idea of this kind of *relationality* (Butler, 2011) does, however, constitute part of the agenda of the ONW. Collective physical presence and mutual support are a rather obvious part of patrolling the streets of a particular area. In gathering people, they do not only mean to constitute the ears and eyes of the community (with the principle task of observing and reporting) but also to make a statement to people who do not follow the law or the moral standards of individuals within the group. As a physically tangible human wall, patrollers make it clear that certain social standards will not be compromised and their secured territory and confident composure shall not be penetrated.

In reality, it is a select few of the members who actually go out into the streets as a group of patrollers. Members are encouraged to use dog walks and trips to the local supermarket as an opportunity to keep their eyes and ears open for unusual and ‘suspicious’ activity. Such experiences often become part of the virtual log. Other reports in the Google and WhatsApp chat groups, as well as the posts on Facebook are sourced in observations conducted from the living rooms and kitchen windows of peoples’ homes. In the monthly meetings of the ONW it becomes evident that showing physical presence is not considered an essential part of membership for most of the roughly 140 signed-up members. Perhaps, as is speculated in the meetings, this is due to the conservative, inclusive and ‘non-fun’ image of the organisation. Virtual chat groups and particularly the WhatsApp chat groups on a street level (not requiring an official membership) have grown abundantly in the last few months (the first few months of their existence). Those chat forums function as an elaborate emergency whistle and as an outlet of one’s worries and suggestions for communal improvement. The groups enable members to reach out for help without their affiliation with the group becoming common knowledge or something the members identify as, posing questions of who should get access to information and how this information may be filtered (both ongoing topics of discussion in the monthly ONW meetings).

I found a detailed engagement with the WhatsApp chat groups to be particularly important and central in an ethnographic work on the ONW as they have a) mushroomed over the past few months, due to a perceived drastic increase of crime in the area, and as they b) constitute a main source of communication and basis for local networking for the ONW members. The impact of the chat groups on perceptions of safety and notions of the suspect (located outside of the networks) are thus well worth being discussed in great detail. The chat groups allow residents to find similar-minded others across the suburb to exchange information with, to cooperate and to socialise. John describes them as little sub-cultural islands that have their own ways of looking at crime and sociality. While some of them are social groups and more intended for organising braais³⁵ for people in the street – others have been decided to exclusively focus on pressing crime issues and suspicions. The estimated 35-50 small groups (by administrator John) are accessible for non-members and also allow for what Postill (2008:419) calls ‘banal activism’, which is ‘the activism of seemingly mundane issues such as traffic congestion, waste disposal and petty crime’. The sector leaders decide what information is relevant for the main ONW group, which is accessible to members of the ONW only. Suburbs, Postill (2008) argues,

³⁵ ‘Braai’ is the commonly used Afrikaans word for barbeque.

are particularly well suited to the study of emerging forms of residential sociality in the form of ‘internet localisation’. Through a collective production of sociality, the social capital (Bourdieu 2009) of the participants increases. I argue that this increase of social capital is tied to a continuous creation and re-creation of a phantom ‘Other’ – the ‘suspect’ and ideologically situated, a potential intruder of a particularly constructed social sphere. ‘The suspect’ is a continuously reproduced product of the imagination of the participating members of the ONW, laid onto physical bodies which can then be seen as carrying not only their own understandings of self but those selves imagined by the ONW members - with those imaginations being informed by experiences of the past, engagements with the present and aspirations for a safe and secure future.

Physical bodies patrolling the streets are the ideal and a general measurement of the success of a ONW. Virtual communities are not central to the idea of a watched and regulated area. However, the virtual corporeality evident in the groups in which discussions flow and people seem to feel free to exchange ideas and express their grievances co-ground a cultural notion of being in the world, founded in a pluralisation of sociality and place (Nast & Pile, 2005). In other words, the groups constitute a cultural space in which different social hats can be worn and/or serve as part of a cultural costume attributed to certain outsiders of the group. They also transform the spatial economy of bodies and impact the ways in which crime and threats are imagined and internalised. Reading suburban Observatory through cyber media is helpful in gaining an understanding of how ‘suspicious’ bodies are conceptualised and met in actual encounters. The reading and telling of the bodies of Simone and ‘Crutches’ (see below) in the groups are telling in how crime is understood, internalised and communicated in Observatory.

7.1. Simone, the troublemaker

Often, it is specific individuals whose habits are known and who are referred to by their first name or nicknames. Simone, for instance, is one of the most referred to ‘troublemakers’ of the area as she is known to have a heroin addiction which she feeds by making money through prostitution and begging. Simone, sometimes seen walking around in high heels over the pavement and forcing a smile that owes its lively colours to her lipstick. At times, she greets me in passing as though we knew each other well – sometimes I receive an empty look in return to my greeting nods or smiles. When Simone is the topic of discussion in the chat groups, there is a brief response from many sides that read almost like the sigh of parents who know better. Complaints are usually related to her shooting heroin in public areas or on people’s porches.

Another complaint was about her ‘flashing her privates for everyone to see’ (WhatsApp chat group, 30.12.15). Simone, amongst other particular locals, serves as a physical symbol and observable, embodied signifier of how criminal activity is generally explained by NW members and the local media. A cocktail of addiction and desperation can lead to criminal activities such as the trading of drugs and prostitution, attracting an unwanted clientele to the area. Simone’s thin and weathered body thus becomes an invitation for further criminal activity, which is often explained through outsiders coming in who, in order to feed their drug habits, solicit money through begging, pick-pocketing and street/house robberies. Her body, associated with social rebellion, particular kinds of crime and other crime tolling from it, thus essentially signifies social disorder and constitutes a reminder of what the ONW aims to tackle.

7.2. Faces and spaces of crime

Another local character is referred to as ‘Crutches’ or ‘Pretty face’, due to his occasional use of crutches when working as a car guard or begging and due to one of many tattoos (stating ‘pretty face’) that crosses his throat and gives his toothless smile³⁶ a challenging wisp. ‘Crutches’ is associated with crime as are all unofficial car guards generally and people who spend their time begging. When his nicknames ‘Crutches’ or ‘Pretty face’ are mentioned in the group, the only additional information offered is the particular spot where he is at that moment. What this essentially means is clear: trouble. The solution: having him ‘removed’ by the police for informal car-guarding or loitering. Both faces and certain spaces can trigger an immediate association with crime in the chat group. Discussions on homelessness in the Google chat group (which appears to be more for social issues and for reporting particular criminal activities that have occurred) are where opinions clash. In regards to the removal of a group of people using the nearby Liesbeek River as shelter or a hangout spot, opinions ranged from a ‘they are all criminals’ sentiment to expressions of empathy and expressed needs to support social outcasts. In an online article, written by a local resident in response to the expelling of a group of people camping in the area and claims that many handbags had been found with them (rendering the riverbed a hot-spot for thieves), a touching example of a refugee was given containing a detailed account of his struggles and skilful attempts to cope with them.

7.3. Signifying bodies

³⁶ Front teeth are often removed deliberately by low-income South Africans classified as ‘Coloureds’ for status and being fashionable. Outside of this cultural space the lack of front teeth is more associated with poverty.

Simone, and Crutches offer examples of how descriptions of particular individuals through the chat groups can affect the reader's understanding of particular crimes and their associations with particular types of personified bodies. However, more often than not, 'suspicious' characters are reduced to very short descriptions, including racial coding – usually through a substitute of the racial categories 'coloured' ('charly'), 'white' (whiskey) and 'black' ('bravo'). This is usually followed by a short description of the way in which the observed person is clothed, often as wearing hoodies and beanies and perhaps a noticeable colour. All this tends to be preceded or followed by a descriptive term regarding the person's mannerisms, justifying the log in the WhatsApp chat group, which is reserved for ongoing and unsolved 'suspicious' activities. The person may simply be described as 'suspicious', as 'loitering' or 'being up to monkey business'. Sometimes there is a description of the person's behaviour involved, for instance looking into cars (possibly in search of items to steal), walking slowly or aimlessly or being loud and offensive. Responses may come from Brett or Richard. There may also be further information shared by other group members, for example a similar experience with the same person or a call for caution.

Nast and Pile (2005:9), state that "the body is woven into many layers of signification, through the projection of images onto seemingly blank surfaces, onto the unwritten surfaces of the skin; through the writing of meanings onto bodies and places by intersecting fields of discourse". The 'suspect' written through policing cyber bodies is of a certain kind and constitutes a projection of peoples' anxieties. Sometimes, 'suspicious' bodies are written in very descriptive and suggestive terms, presupposing a shared notion of a criminal or a common moral economy of suspicion. At the same time, offensive racial terms (such as 'skollie', a stereotypical, poor 'Coloured' man) that are morally linked to the reincarnations of 'the suspect' (see Jensen, 2006) are avoided as they are likely to become intellectualised if they are used by a member of the groups.

First and foremost, the groups can be seen as serving as forums to express and combat perceived *precarity* (Butler, 2008), for the ones in the street who physically approach or subtly observe and circle their projected vision of a criminal 'suspect' as well as for those who collect and add to the log of information from a relatively secure fortresses. At the same time, the group constitutes a space in which *precarity* (Butler, 2008) becomes distributed. A particular 'suspect' may be actually hunted down and treated as a criminal or even get arrested by the police officers involved in the thread as a result of shared information. The vision and personification of a

criminal figure generally (fitting the common description of the ‘charly’ male with a beanie bag and hoodie, for instance) has an effect on how people who may fall into this category are approached. Thus, agencies, actions and norms become altered through the virtual public sphere within the cyber groups, especially through the short and description-based communication of the WhatsApp chat groups with their interlinked-ness with SAPS and private security leading to concrete action. The other groups and meetings offer spaces in which the process of social fingerprinting becomes a critical discussion topic, with some radically disagreeing and others pleading their cases rather patiently.

If physical bodies link us to a place, what becomes of the role of the body through virtual spaces, used alternatively to actual physical patrols or as communication media during patrols by the exceptional few? Nast and Pile (2005) find that a “software” (such as a virtual chat room) is a disembodiment euphemism that removes our imaginaries away from the material (hard). Computers are thus screening devices that displace, filter out, and disallow “real” places and bodies whilst ideologically replacing them with virtual ones. In the process, notions of bodies are filtered through memories and space. Using this as an outset, I use the section to engage with the question of what kind of impact disembodied patrols have on our understandings of bodies and how they become filtered, categorised, and cared for.

7.4. Forums of ideological discrepancies

Analysing data from the different ONW chat forums it becomes clear that one might be able to look at the organisation as a family like Richard does (see Chapter 2) but not as a homogenous group sharing one way of looking at things. I have emphasised the liveliness of discussions within the organisation throughout this dissertation as I found it to be characteristic and descriptive of the quality of the ONW. I would like to use the discussions around the chat forums as spaces in which many see themselves fit to debate freely to offer an example from my Google chat group analysis. The discussion evolved around the release of the Obslife (February 2012 edition) and the announcement of Allan to introduce ‘legal’ car guards as an initiative to socially uplift individuals. There were nine responses within a couple of days.

The first one reads as follows:

Dear Allan

It is always - with interest - that I read the centre spread of ObsLife which is the OBSID page.

I have a few questions about the "official" car guards who are to be employed:

- * what will be their main purpose?*
- * where will they be stationed?*
- * what hours will they work?*
- * how will one identify them as "official"? - (just a bib is useless, it can be handed over to anyone)*
- * will they have IDs with photographs?*
- * are they going to stand in the road and try to wave people into parking bays whilst standing in the said bay?*

I don't want to appear 100% negative but I do have concerns about this project. I further appreciate what you are all trying to do for the disadvantaged.

I should appreciate some clarification.

*Kind regards
Rosemary*

Another response read:

Well done to OBSID for taking the initiative to introduce some accountability at the car park. I think it's a great idea that OBSID will be improving on the existing system of random people.

I'm confident a certain amount of training and controls will be in place and we will all have a better parking experience.

*Thanks Allan for the initiative.
Barbara*

This was followed by the comment:

Having just read the relevant sentence or two I am a little bit concerned at this car guarding gig. Firstly, it's not a useful contribution to anyone. OBSID will simply be paying handouts to accost people for money which I have no doubt they will continue to do. I have no problem with the street sweeping initiative or maybe some gardening or something useful.

Car guards that get paid is just a handout for nothing in return and I cannot agree with that and think it's a rotten idea.

What next - pay the drug dealers not to sell their drugs to the public - at least a drug dealer is performing a useful service to the portions of community that uses them and in Obs that's a large portion I would imagine if you just consider cannabis.

Slippery slope

Tom

Further responses spoke for the positive impacts of car-guarding and challenged the very meanings of the terms ‘car guards’ and ‘homelessness’. The discussion then rested. I chose this example as it illustrates how chat groups offer an alternative space for members of an organisation of patrollers in which people resist the act of physically patrolling. The benefits of forming a part of this social body anyway lies in its capacity for people to connect in other ways and offer each other support.

7.5. Couch patrolling as distant caring

The fact that very few patrollers actually spend their time in the streets might be due to different factors, for instance a plain lack of motivation, anxiety to willingly expose oneself to potential criminals or not identifying as an active part of the organisation. I argue that, while any of those factors might apply to particular individuals, the luring attribute of cyber patrols is that they seem to enable one to ‘care distantly’ (term established by Butler, 2009) and selectively.

There is no lack of shared information and images in the Google, WhatsApp and Facebook groups but they differ from face-to-face conversations in that one can choose when and how to access and process other peoples’ experiences. Butler (2009) argues that what is happening very close to a person may disable one to bear having to take responsibility for it. In so doing, she is referring to cases of unwilling adjacency, for instance, as the result of forced emigration or the redrawing of the boundaries of a nation-state. With regards to information shared in said cyber groups, I found it likely that it is the topic of crime that is too close to home to care or take physical action and thus becomes abstracted through cyber media of communication. In the filtering of experiences or descriptions of criminals through space (turning them into ideas rather than imminent threats) and memory (the subject headline of a Google chat group message might prompt a refusal of engagement, excluding it from one’s memory) it becomes easier to detach oneself from the topic and to become an abstract factor in the process of sharing oneself. A precondition of ‘caring distantly’ in this fashion and developing a feeling of solidarity across space and time towards people considered to be similar (they can therefore be part of the same group) is that the information triggering this solidarity must remain ‘relevant’. Chairperson of the ONW, Luke, reminds attendants of the monthly meeting that it is not beneficial to be swamped with too much information or ‘chitchat’ and that communication channels are ought to be kept free for ‘relevant’ information. He therefore decided to split the main sector groups

into two groups each –one for ‘pressing’ information that should be acted upon quickly by the police officers and private security and one in which more general and less pressing worries can be expressed. This categorization of information makes it easier for members to elect what kind of input they want to consume and when. ONW members can thus choose the degree to which they want to relate to other peoples’ happenstances and how much they are willing to care. At the same time, the different street groups are constantly in a process of negotiating what kind of information should be shared, how and when. What is too much information, what is worth knowing? What is the best way of using the medium in order to distribute a notion of safety and community instead of paranoia?

During fieldwork, most people I conversed with about levels of crime had at least one crime story to tell and were seldom reluctant to do so. As crime stories are something many people have in common, they create a feeling of ‘sitting in the same boat’. As members choose to use particular media to cope with a perceived likelihood of becoming a victim to crime instead of physical patrols, I found it ethically questionable to take advantage of my access to their email and phone numbers (being a member of the ONW myself) and interrogate their behaviour and decided lack of physical presence when it comes to the organization. However, the fact that ‘cyber-only’ members find the vulnerability to crime to be a topic of relevance is evidenced in their shares and contributions – and in their ‘caring distantly’.

Members who attend physical street patrols often seek comfort through direct social contact. Knowing and seeing your actual neighbours, having a conversation while patrolling the streets are strategies to create a sense of security and safety. In cyber-patrolling, on the other hand, it seems to be the temporal and spatial dispersion and sense of remoteness or detachment that offer a level of comfort. What stands in the way of an emotional detachment, however, are the postings of pictures of the ‘criminally suspicious’. As Butler (2009) states, images can trigger an involuntary sense of proximity and ethical responsibility with regards to a certain topic. War pictures, for instance, can be strategically used to serve a political agenda and embed a particular subject matter in an emotionally padded discourse: These images are ‘something that is beyond our will, not of our making, that comes to us from the outside, as an imposition, but also as an ethical demand’ (Butler, 2009). The discourse on criminal activity within the groups is, as said, at times specked with images of the suspected person. Occasionally. I find myself thinking ‘ah that guy!’ when one of the pictures is loaded and remember a random encounter with the

individual somewhere in the suburb. Even when the image is not familiar, having visual evidence of the person being in a particular place at a certain time can harshly interfere with the potential of the groups to be used selectively and with emotional distance. This is also true for the message tone of the WhatsApp chat groups, which can be silenced for a day, week or year (I took advantage of this technical possibility after three months of fieldwork, as I found the frequency of the noise to be too intrusive). From this, I concluded that the chat groups are spaces in which an emotional engagement with the topic of crime can be individually moderated and selected to some degree, the images imposed though they are persistent and ethically demanding in that they follow a black-and-white, victim-perpetrator scheme. In the next section, I look at the ways in which cyberspaces such as the chat groups distribute *precarity* (Butler, 2008) and become closely linked to spaces and activities of everyday life.

7.6. Precarious and comforting qualities of couch-patrolling

As people, none of us is beyond the dependency on a supportive social space that recognizes us as ‘fully human’ (Biehl, 2007) and thus ‘grievable’ (Butler, 2009). A denial of social exchanges that nurtures humanness equals ‘public deaths’ (Biehl, 2007) or ‘unrecognised lives’ (Butler, 2009) and legitimates frameworks that expel individuals and groups of people into ‘zones of social abandonment’ (Biehl, 2007). The ONW chat groups constitute a cultural space, its own social world, presenting a particular virtual reality in which ‘the suspect’ is continuously portrayed in similar ways. I argue that the image resulting from this routine practice, established to ease anxieties with regards to crime and generate feelings of safety and solidarity, becomes internalized and translates onto embodied practice - distributing *precarity* (Butler, 2008) for ‘others’ or ‘suspects’ in turn.

Being unrecognised or socially abandoned was a motivator for Amber in joining the ONW and patrolling physically and in groups. Knowing some of her neighbours makes her feel safer, she says, especially as a single woman. She has experienced a couple of house break-ins. In one experience she was holding her door closed while a group of men attempted to push their way into her home. For Amber, the ONW decreases her notion of *precarity* (Butler, 2008) in that it emphasises her humanness as a recognized part of a supportive social network. If something were to happen to her, there are people nearby who might help, care and grieve for her.

As Butler (2009:149-49) states, our interdependency constitutes us as more than thinking beings, ‘indeed as social and embodied, vulnerable and passionate, our thinking gets nowhere

without the presupposition of the interdependent and sustaining conditions of life'. Falling away from the social body that renders a person 'grievable' and 'fully human' means that one's whole life story may be easily forgotten. Richard and Christina find their difficult family relationships worrisome and admit to often feeling lonely. Patrols, in physical and virtual form, are a way of keeping bad thoughts away and gaining control. They are also a way of feeling connected to others. It is the very purpose of the ONW group to resist an 'air of violence' by gaining strength as a group and through each other's support. Much like in the tale the 'three little pigs' in which the evil wolf attempts to destroy the safekeeping shelter of the little pigs with a big blow, the efforts of the ONW to combat crime are sometimes more or less successful. However, it seems as if the mere membership of the group conveys an affirmation of one's right to live safely (leading to a regulation of movements within the area). Being part of this social group is a sign of recognition as a human and thus carries within itself a notion of safety. As with any social group, being an accepted part of the neighbourhood watch comes with its challenges and the need to 'fit in'. The few physical patrollers tend to be choosy in who they want to walk with and I sometimes heard patrollers making comments such as 'he is nice to patrol with' or 'no, he talks too much'. Cyber groups decrease this social pressure in their potential to recoding oneself (Shields, 1996 with regards to cyber spaces generally). The groups thus offer an eased notion of *precarity* (Butler, 2008) without the societal pressures that come with memberships based on face-to-face encounters only.

The chat groups create boundaries between' the real and the virtual, between time zones and between spaces, near and far. Above all, they create boundaries between bodies and technologies, between our sense of self and our sense of changing roles: the personae we may play or the 'hats we wear' in different situations are altered' (Shields, 1996:7). Perceptions of proximity, notions of time and one's role within it change. The chat groups thus offer the space to adopt a role that one may be otherwise denied or reluctant to embody and thus serve as spaces for alternative agencies. Local restaurant owner Tom, for instance, uses the ONW Google chat group as a platform to address a number of social issues and often takes a very passionate stance. His restaurant is located near the Liesbeek River and is part of a group that cleans the river and its green surroundings from the garbage brought there by the weather conditions or by people camping there. The space is said to be a hide-out for thieves in the area as there were a large number of handbags found there once. I often see Tom at one local pub, usually surrounded by the same group of people. The large, fully bearded man seems quite introverted. I have never

seen him attend any of the ONW meetings. Richard comments, Tom makes his job difficult by opposing his position. And yet, he added, ‘he is not even staying in Observatory anymore’. Trevor is very engaged in various issues picked up in the Google chat groups, from issues regarding pets, human rights to surveying the prices and quality of private security companies. For Trevor, the group seems to be a space in which he can comfortably express his distinguished opinions without having a direct confrontation.

The chat groups also generate a sense of collectivism and of discussions that can lead to democratically generated infrastructural strategies without people having to attend monthly public forums. Being part of a larger group, individuals are linked across space and time. The groups constitute public spheres in which members are exposed to ‘similar economic, political and material conditions [...] individuating technologies eliminate the ability to speak laterally, to trust others or to occupy public spaces with others’ who are different (Shields, 1996:9). Collectivism and shared markers bear a notion of agency. Common desires are set in motion and new opportunities for expression appear to arise. However, commonalities and a sense of collectivism in this contexts exists in juxtaposition to ‘the Other’ or ‘the suspect’ who symbolically manifests in individual cases but is imagined as an overarching agentive. In spite of them being perceived as great security threats, the individuals whose pictures are posted look nothing like embodiments of social muscle power but resemble weakened, fragile and often weathered-looking bodies.

Icons, as Shields (1996) explained, can be seen as bodily references, expressing bodily emotions and appealing to bodily emotions and desires of group members. Even though patrollers understand their duties to observe and report (with police and private security forces often translating the information into further action), there is a subversion of an apparent lack of agency and dependence on government institutions taking place through the group communication. The constant contact with Constable Brett Nile who emphasises his notion of responsibility for the area on a daily basis through the WhatsApp chat group (he also is Facebook-friends with a large number of ONW members) and being able to log and archive particular incidents, offers the organisation more space to manoeuvre and establish different kinds of dialogues. If a matter is not adhered to by police or the *Obsid*, disapproval is expressed while ‘good work’ is rewarded with many symbolic ‘thumbs up’ and excessive praises. The ONW as a whole also serves as a controlling body in that failure to react in an emergency on

behalf of the SAPS and the *Obsid* are shared and furthermore discussed and critically analysed in the monthly meetings as well as during patrols. The different modes of expression and reaction to socio-political happenstances produces a sense of influence and reduces a notion of being a powerless victim to circumstances beyond one's capacities.

Virtual spaces may sometimes render the summarizing and digestion of crime stories and make relating to them easier. Since material is deemed relevant enough to be posted, it has merit. Knowing that the content of the group is regulated (some messages are taken out or message threads are discontinued in the Google chat group) makes the remaining and permanent content of the groups appear relevant to its members (although people sometimes disagree as to what constitutes 'appropriate' content). Despite the abstraction of stories and bodies within the groups, corporeal experiences are still important reference points in the forums. Actual experiences are translated and abstracted into a virtually told story – just to then stretch the 'lifeworld and spill out of the computer world to refigure the conventions and routines of daily life' (Shields, 1996:6). Cyber stories on crime thus do not merely remain stories inspired by corporeal experiences but, in turn, impact daily routines and encounters. In my first patrol (described in Chapter 4) one man was recognised by all patrollers as one described in the group on the same day, even though Richard was the only one that saw him. The rest of the group took the description and Hanne's suspicion that it was indeed the same person (identified in dark of the late evening hours) as reasonable motivators to identify the young man as being linked to a crime. We followed him.

When walking with Richard, he tends to remind me of particular issues discussed in the groups, which he follows, files and responds to religiously as the local security manager. He relates the blogs to what he sees and thus transforms what I, at times (depending on my mood), read as interesting or overwhelming information (including grey-zone in between) into statistics and physical interference. Through his proud reports of having chased homeless people out of the area or Brett Nile having arrested someone formerly declared 'suspicious', I became aware of the physical repercussions that the practice of couch-patrolling and the framing of potential perpetrators in the chat forums can have. People categorised as 'suspicious' based on their physical appearance and mannerisms may spend the night in jail without proof of illegal conduct. It appears that the only way in which the ONW considers itself able to resist an 'air of violence', rendering themselves precarious potential victims of crime, is a vigorous push into

the opposite direction in which bodies born into circumstances of *precarity* (Butler, 2008) keep being confined to particular social spaces, leading to a manifestation of historical inequality, traceable along territorial and racial lines.

7.7. Conclusion

What is mapped through the media of communication and the bodies within it is a moral economy of suspicion that manifests in one's sense of being in a space. In the ONW chat platforms, body/space transgressions, the blurred boundaries between inside and outside as well as between different bodies does not lead to an equalising of bodies. Instead, binaries of difference become transgressed and reinforced. As a result, the groups can be seen as spaces in which perceived *precarity* (Butler, 2008) can be coped with - and as spaces in which *precarity* (Butler, 2008) is distributed simultaneously. The questions grappled with specifically in this chapter are concerned with the particular ways in which patrols take place online and with the kinds of impacts that 'couch-patrolling' may have on the corporeality of the members making use of them. What kind of information is distributed, filtered or consumed and what kind of impact does this have on different bodies? I conclude that agencies, actions and norms become altered through the virtual public sphere within the cyber groups, leading to a multi-layered configuration of the suburban social space.

The bodies produced in WhatsApp chat groups and other forums can be seen as sites of struggle (Rich, 1984) with their geopolitics being produced through unequal power relations. The virtual chat groups analysed in this chapter are exclusive to people inhabiting a particular social space who have an interest in maintaining the social boundaries established within it that keep people conceptualised as 'Other' outside of this space. Through the channelling of bodies that fall out of the 'norm', normative bodies (that is the embodied patroller) are produced in opposition to 'suspicious' ones. While this also happens in performing the street patroller, the virtually created 'suspect' often forms the basis upon which patroller and police act. He also contributes to and facilitates anxieties linked to certain locations and images, becoming part of a collectively embodied memory. The virtually created realities are supportive of a desire of suburban class reproduction, but also become challenged and contested in the different social forums. Yet, the virtually produced and widely circulated 'suspect' and desires to distribute security by rendering the space exclusive only to certain kinds of bodies form a quintessential part of the ONW mentality and strategy to combat crime and reduce *precariousness* for formal

residents of Observatory. The social networks tied within the group ease notions of *precariousness* for some in that alternative and selective ways are offered in which to engage with anxieties of becoming a victim to crime - through a notion of collectivity and increased agency without the pressures of physical involvements. At the same time that the group emphasises social belonging as well as the worth and influence of its members, it increases levels of *precariousness* for people categorised as 'suspect' in a process of social fingerprinting and the agentive producing of particular live worlds. Agencies therefore shift to different degrees, depending on the role one's body occupies in these cultural spaces. The option to physically remove oneself from the strategic street patrols and the quick and vast impact of information and images shared through communication technologies render the categorising of bodies impactful and easy to emotionally distance oneself from. This is important to consider, particularly because the conceptualization of 'suspects' and the framing of particular types of bodies translate into experiential corporealities. Understandings of the 'suspect' impact the ways in which differently gestated bodies encounter one another through links with state institutions which carry the power to arrest and physically strip the body of its humanness. Thus, virtual 'chats' may quickly turn into a precariously experienced reality.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions: Masking vulnerability and other comforts of being a patroller

Abstract:

Relationships of trust and distrust in Observatory hold more than meets the eye. The trust in state institutions to protect that John Locke (1967) once described as essential for the sharing of a social space is corrupted in South Africa, as is evidenced by an enormous private economy of security and volunteer-based organisations of social protection like the ONW. The responsibility to protect from and penalise those who commit crime are seen as lying within the hand of civilians. When private and supposedly ‘high class’ protection services were judged to have failed in Observatory, private networks of security and trust were revived and renewed on different levels. The ONW, as an organisation, resulted from this and seeks to decrease perceived precarity through strategic practices like patrolling the neighbourhood and discussing the foundations of the organisation in meetings. It is a space in which agency and confidence become fostered while fears become dominated as a collective. However, the setting of strategy, notes de Certeau (2000), presumes control, is self-segregating and means setting oneself up as a barricaded insider. As cultivated strategy and as an embodied and performed practice, patrolling the neighbourhood in Observatory has a deep impact on what kinds of relationships can thrive and the degrees of humanness that become attributed to individuals. Increased agency and confidence serve to dominate fears of crime and legitimate practices of dominating others – namely everyone considered ‘suspect’. This ethnography is a testament to the struggles of negotiating what is locally acknowledged as a necessary side effect of coming together for self-protecting purposes.

Anthropologist Paul Farmer once said that the idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world³⁷. Years after the official end of apartheid, the scaling of humanities is still a practice that may not always be done consciously with an intent to increase one’s own human capital – but it is still part of South African social landscapes. Ideas of what type of person belongs in which kind of social space is still prevalent and can be observed in a suburb like Observatory, specifically in practices of scanning areas for people who are

³⁷ <http://onlineforlife.org/graphics/the-idea-that-some-lives-matter-less-is-the-root-of-all-that-is-wrong-with-the-world/>

considered criminal ‘suspects’ to the ones patrolling the area they are (sometimes) legally and socially accepted inhabitants of. Spatial exclusion essentially means the prioritising of the right to safety of suburban inhabitants to ideas of free and shared public spaces. It means that access to the suburbs as urban spaces for opportunities in which different strategies of survival can be practiced due to a better economic flow can be an open path to some, while being denied to others. In Observatory, globetrotters, students and international interns come and go and boost the local economy. At the same time, locals, with sometimes lesser financial means, pose expectations and develop strategies that come with their enduring physical presence and occupancy of the space. While Observatory is a liminal space for some, leading to new stages and experiences, for most of the people in local households, I found it to be a space that requires strategizing in order to render existences in the suburb more stable and safe.

At the time of writing the concluding thoughts to this dissertation, especially in late December 2015 and January 2016, criminal incidents in the neighbourhood had increased and dominated discussions in the forums. A spate of house break-ins in the area, speculated in the chat groups to be due to the holiday season and a heat wave, led to nervousness being expressed through them and ONW members asking for early-morning patrols to take place that only a handful of people (namely Luke, Richard, Christina and Amber) were willing to do. On the 15th of February 2015 and after a very strategic house break in in the early morning hours in which the passports and all the keys of the house were collected by the intruders (in addition to other valuable items they desired such as laptops and cell phones), Observatory was reported to be ‘under siege’ in the group. The incident was particular in that it strayed from the commonly expressed opportunistic and drug-related explanations to crime. A few days later, John, the ‘father’ of the NW and risk manager by profession, conducted a survey across a few streets, concluding that 60% of the households did not have an alarm system. A follow-up comment suggested that this may be the reason why the area is so affected by crime, suggesting that not being prepared and equipped for criminal acts equals an invitation to forcefully enter peoples’ houses. In light of the tensions at the time, I want to briefly mention two events in order to, once again, emphasise the complexities that lie within perceived threats and the comforts of security.

When my friend and housemate was robbed off her handbag (containing the house keys amongst other things) on the last day of the year 2015, I found myself making use of the contacts

I had made during fieldwork (not just because of my interest in the topic but to increase my own sense of security. It felt good to have Brett's number ready on WhatsApp and having him replying and reassuring me within seconds. As my friend had gone to change the lock at the house she was sitting nearby. The police had arrived but no case could be opened and the police left. I closed the door behind them angrily and dissatisfied, debating whether or not to share the information of the robbery in the WhatsApp group. After all, this is what the group is for. I had been avoiding making any comments in the chat groups as so to not influence them. However, this seemed an appropriate time to take part in the process of reporting and sharing as, I told myself, others being aware of the incident will help them as well – a thought that I now find debatable. At the time, I did not see myself contributing to an acute worry about crime in the area, but was part of something that helped processing this perceived and immediate threat just by getting the information out and without expecting any reactions to the message (they are not always acknowledged with words). This experience strengthened many of my findings and conclusions regarding the comfort of the ONW and their ways of communicating offers (even though as comforting as they may be, they simultaneously encourage spatial exclusion and potentially perpetuate the fear of crime).

Another incident that warned me to simplify the mechanisms and relationships of trust and distrust involved in creating a sense of security in Observatory. A resident reported to the Google chat group an incident where he was arrested by the police after having filmed them beating him up and spinning him to the floor a 'suspect' during an arrest. The particular officers in question are not known to me personally. The resident Ian Gilfillan, included a link to one of two articles he wrote about the experience of being 'unlawfully arrested'. The incident, described in great detail in the article, made it clear that what is 'lawful' depends on what is known of the law by people in a particular situation in which representatives of the law become involved for one or another reason (it also reminded me of Richard's complaint about vagrants knowing 'too much' about human rights). The reply by chair Luke was careful. He stated that the facts of the case should be 'properly investigated before we get too carried away' and that it should not be concluded that all SAPS members act unlawfully. He also encouraged members to report similar experiences. The trauma and direct confrontation with what it means to suddenly become a suspect (in this case because he had evidence of the unlawful behaviour of police members) experienced and described by Ian became part of the process of rationalising discussions as in any other topic. Reading about this reemphasised that relationships of trust

and distrust are complex and coated with the stickiness that different forms of embodied power can enforce, potentially leaving one's experiences particularly memorable. I find this to be an important realisation and hope that the rest of these concluding comments will be seen in the ambiguously vague light that any ethnographically investigated topic should be shed in.

This dissertation has focused on the individuals and institutions that 'do' this strategizing, finding that the fear of crime in this suburb is related to particular ways of being 'suspicious' or distrustful. The first question I posed at the beginning of this dissertation was how suspicion becomes cultivated, embodied and performed in Observatory. The data show that the ONW, as a collective, spreads suspicion in certain directions. The people considered 'suspicious' usually fall within the racial categories 'Coloured' and 'Black'. The bodies of suspects suggest an interpretation of them as symbolic for a socio-economic continuation of apartheid that manifests in an ongoing spatial segregation of people and the frequently resulting lack of bodily and corporeal nourishment. At the same time, what is considered 'suspicious' is also subject to individual experience and a shared aspiration for a future in which fears of precariously falling apart from a collective support the group and thus feeling more vulnerable and exposed to crime will be an obsolete and distant memory (see Emirbayer & Mische, 1998 on agency). How a particular 'phantom suspect' is imagined and motivates people to patrol in the suburb thus depends on the individual but is specific to the socio-cultural context. The collage in the appendices shows that the constructed bohemian and liberal image of the suburb and its acknowledged inhabitants and practices of intellectualising and dissecting topics regarding human rights does not particularly manage to break with apartheid-inherited practices of spatial segregation. The bodies are not only fit into particular colour schemes associated with the racial categories 'Coloured' and 'Black' but also seem to show signs of sheer lack in terms of human care. The 'suspect' is often constructed in opposition to the 'patroller', who is himself a product of shared notions of what it means to be strong and able to defend one's social standing. In patrolling the streets and in reclaiming the of agency by rendering Observatory a social space exclusive to the comparably affluent, patrollers of the neighbourhood put on a certain kind of social skin (see Turner 2012) by performing 'the patroller'.

The constant cultivation and circulation of a specific kind of 'suspect' and 'patroller', a person seeking justifications to defend what he (the choice of the masculine here is due to identified

links of machismo to being able to protect) considers to be his space impact on spaces considered private or exclusive to some – but also on what is meant to be public space and potential platform for all kinds of social interactions. People in Observatory thus navigate suspicion and precariousness by masking themselves and others in certain ways that narrow paths of exchange of sociality and care. While the ONW, alternative source of trust to the state, constitutes as a social space that fosters agency by being part of a community and an environment of mutual support, it builds on pillars of deep distrust and suspicion when it comes to the social ‘Other’ – even if these topics are continuously raised and debated in the forums of the ONW. Who is expected to ‘misbehave’ becomes internalised and affects social relationships in the suburb, coloured by the perceived need to clean the area from those who are thought of as disturbing the peace and safety of the community. In the process, community ties become strengthened, despite the quarrels and conflicting positions and relationships of power that are common in every social group. The performed patroller is often mirrored by ideas of the ‘suspect’ and framed by particular notions of masculinity that female patrollers often adhere to during street patrols and in direct confrontation with ‘suspects’ –in the monthly meetings.

Social trust and distrust in the suburb cannot be looked at in isolation. Factors of distrust are sought to be eliminated by the members of the NW and others while other social ties are strengthened. Low (2001) understands attempts to isolate communities in this manner to be a response to middle-class and upper-middle-class individuals’ ‘desire for community and intimacy, consequently leading to strategies of facilitating, avoiding, separating, and monitoring. They bring ‘individual preferences, social forces, and the physical environment together in an architectural reality and cultural metaphor’ (Low 2001:5). The previous chapters have sought to outline the social intricacies of these architectural realities and cultural metaphors, impacting on social textures, ideas of humanness and abilities to relate to one another. I have shown how being ‘suspicious’ seems to form a barricade in human connections, with notions of ‘the patroller’ and ‘the suspect’ constituting ideological binaries. However, the differences made and manifested in fabricated social roles are individually challenged and are subject to reinterpretations. Ideas of defensible space are also clearly linked to particular ideas of masculinity. Furthermore, relationships in Observatory are often cultivated in an ideological and often virtual sphere. Simultaneously to the increased importance and wide-reaching impact of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) in conceptualising crime and ‘suspects’ in Cape Townian suburbia, there is an expressed longing for a more ‘traditional’

face-to-face community in which neighbours know one another and can be counted on when facing a crisis.

According to Pain (2008), over our life courses, we all move in and out of shades of fear, influenced by our own experiences as well as by social, spatial and temporal situations (also referring to Valentine, 1989; Stanko, 1990a; Pain, 1997a). Yet, the constantly high levels of social distrust³⁸, exclusion and the ways in which suspicion becomes cultivated and embodied practice in urban South Africa call for an academic focus on aspects of intersubjectivity. Butler 2009 finds that intersubjectivity constitutes us as human beings. Our ability to relate to one another also constitutes something tangible and bodily (Csordas 1994). Embodied practices of safety and security reveal a great deal about our existence in relation to others and has thus been central in both, my collection of data (my own bodily experience in being in the field) and the observed and reported bodily experiences of my informants. As power relations in urban South Africa continue to encourage practices of social fingerprinting and ‘Othering’ (in the name of safety and security) they interfere with aspects of human relatedness. However, even though structures and power relations become reproduced to some degree, they are also challenged in Observatory through attempts to broaden discourses regarding the unequal distribution of opportunities.

Increasingly, the fear of crime is seen as inseparable not only from crime and disorder in cities, but also ‘from a range of other social and economic problems concerned with housing, employment, environmental planning and social exclusion relating to poverty, gender, race and so on’ (Pain, 2008:1). In this study, I argue that the fear of violent crime in Observatory is best understood within a framework of social and spatial exclusion, with the likelihood of having long-lasting socio-economic impacts on the local social landscape impacting understandings of what it means to be able to defend oneself and of being exposed to threats. Social fingerprinting and exclusion come with certain embodied practices and a re-production of social class and space through habitual practices (Bourdieu, 1990). The ways in which notions of the self are re-negotiated in this process become very apparent in the ‘new generation’ of neighbourhood watchers who tend to problematize and discuss issues of social exclusion while habitually encouraging the same through their daily routines. At the same time that social inequality-

³⁸ See Jean and John Comaroff (2006) who also noted that levels of fear of crime are not necessarily related to the frequency with which crime occurs or is claimed to occur in official statistics.

promoting structures are criticized and practices of monitoring and social fingerprinting are often abstracted and intellectualized in the suburb, the workings of the power relations involved in the daily practices of safety (in various forms and on various levels) become somewhat obscured through the notion of the ‘suspect’. The ‘suspect’ not only serves as the social glue, holding the NW group together in an attempt to establish social order by implementing their interpretation of state rules and moral standards, but also as the imaginative persona of ‘suspect’ and ‘patroller’ against which the self can be mirrored.

Human realities are always fabricated, invented, imagined and constructed and cultures are made or even ‘made up’ (Conquergood, 1989). Practices of watching the neighbourhood and the cultivation of ‘suspicion’ described throughout this dissertation reveal the ambiguities and enigmas of everyday role-plays or performances in the suburb. Cultural fabrications like the ‘suspect’ and ‘patroller’ holdout the promise of reimagining and refashioning the world. I have interpreted them as part of a software, used in the strategizing against notions of vulnerability and *precariousness*. In the interest of developing policies that may still transform South Africa and all its unique spaces and cultural *mélange* these ‘softwares’ or embodied routines that relate to trust or distrust should be looked at more closely in different South African context in order to get a better understanding of how the perceived underlying barriers (often coated in a rhetoric involving cultural terms) may be challenged in a unifying manner instead of reproducing categorical concepts of what it means to be human in the different niches of this beautiful country.

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APPENDIX

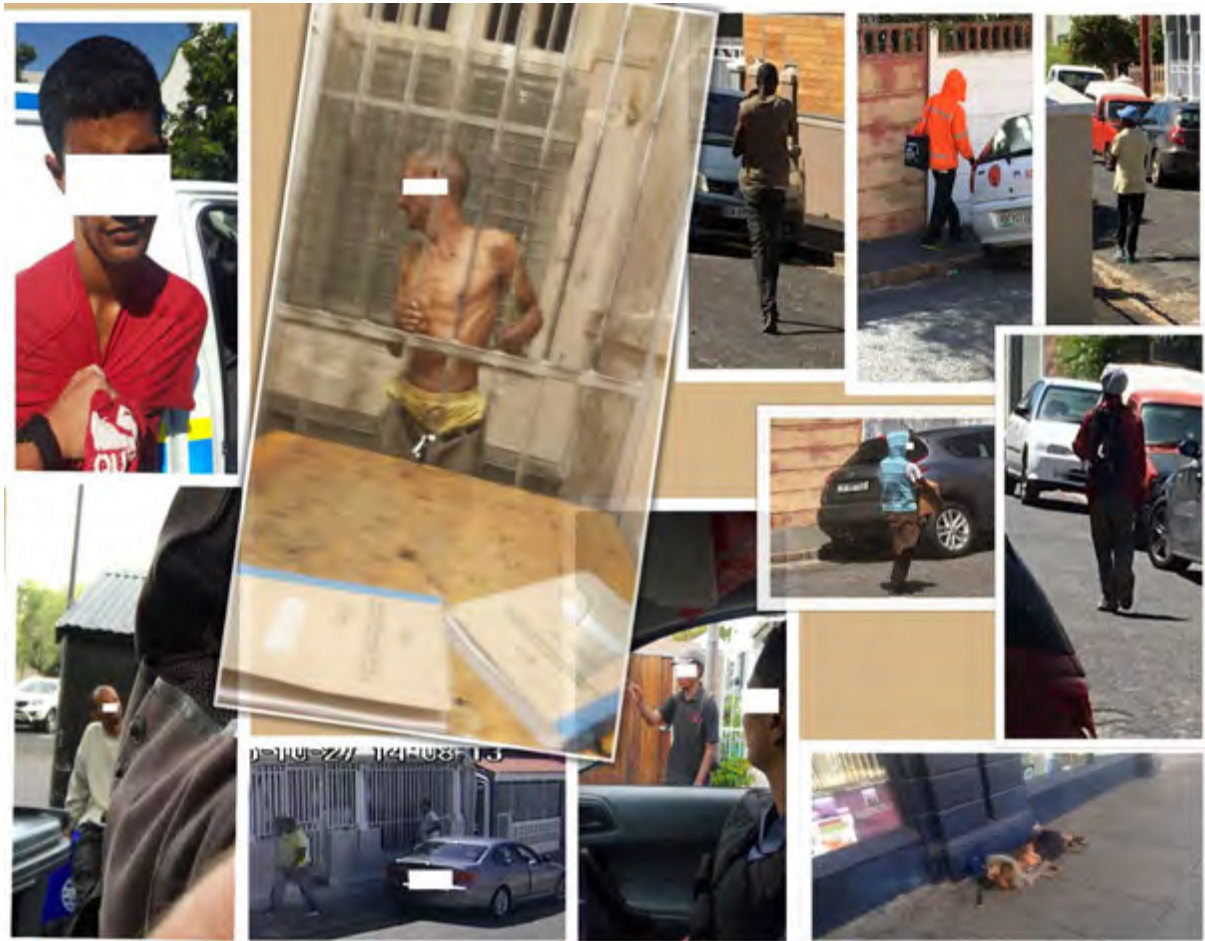


Figure 3

Contextualization of pictures in the collage (Figure 3)

The unedited pictures are rather randomly chosen from the WhatsApp group snapshots of ‘suspicious’ people and situations. They were taken by different members on different occasions. Most of the time, they just served to keep members of the ONW alert to a particular circumstance. I used a crop-tool to render the faces of the men unrecognizable.

Top left: A young man being physically held and photographed by the police.

Centre: A man turning away from the camera as he is being snapshot in a prison cell.

Left bottom: An ONW member secretly documenting a man he finds suspicious.

Right next to it: The circulated shot caught from a private security camera of the neighbouring house of the one that is seemingly attempted to break into by the portrayed men.

Right next to it: A policeman talking to a man while his colleague takes a snapshot of the man pointing down the street, who subsequently is added to the ONW WhatsApp chat thread as another ‘suspect’.

Right bottom: ‘Problem child’ Simone (see page 94 of this dissertation).

Upper right: Different men at different times walking the streets of Observatory and being documented as ‘suspicious’ by different ONW members.

Figure 4: March 2015 edition of the local monthly newspaper Obslife, heading the Observatory railway line to be a spot and escape route for criminals. Location and neglect are thought of making it an attractive space for the unwanted of the suburb.

Obslife

Got visitors coming to Obs?
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March 2015 Tel: 021 811 7654 Neighbourhood news, taken seriously www.obslife.co.za info@obslife.co.za

Obs railway line a security threat

By Tamlynn Thompson

LOCAL security agencies view the neglected state of the railway land that runs through Observatory as a security threat to the area and have voiced their frustration at the refusal by the railway owners to take responsibility for their property.

Charl Brooks, the security manager for Securitas, the security company contracted by the Observatory Improvement District (Obsid), told ObsLife that the last major clean-up on the railway line through the southern suburbs had taken place in 2010 for the soccer World Cup. Since then, they have been battling to get the Passenger Railway Agency of South Africa (Prasa), which owns the railway line, to do take proper care of the property.

Mr Brooks said the state of the railway land is a "disaster" plagued with addicts, rubble, overgrown grass, broken fences and gates and a lack of proper signage.

The railway line is not classified as a public space because it belongs to Prasa. The Obsid's patrollers are only allowed to patrol and secure public areas.



The Obsid public safety supervisor Ivor Manuel showed ObsLife the remains of a fire, made by vagrants living on the railway. Some materials of an adjacent storage in St Michaels Road were burnt as a result.

The railway line is therefore a no-go area for the Obsid patrols.

Yet the railway line is a major security risk that needs to be fixed and tidied up, says Mr Brooks.

Prasa spokesperson Riana Scott did not answer ObsLife's questions about when the last clean-up of the line was undertaken. She did say that Prasa's budgets were constrained, but that "every effort will be made to clean rail precincts to acceptable standards" in

the new financial year starting 1 April.

On a tour of the line, Obsid security supervisor Ivor Manuel pointed out a spot close to St Michaels Road where a fire made by addicts had recently spread to private property. The signs of the fire were still visible in front of the unlocked gate that led onto the railway land.

Three hide-outs of street addicts were visible along the Observatory

continued on page 5

Savanna, all flavours 330ml
R49.99 per 6-pack





Shake things up

Amstel Lager 330ml
R169.99 per Case



Smirnoff Cooler 250ml
R54.99 per 6-pack



Four Cousins Range
Red, white, Rose 1.5L
R47.99 each



Gordons Gin 750ml
R84.99 each



Klipdrift Brandy 750ml
R99.99 each



Sedgewicks Old Brown Sherry 750ml
R25.99 each



Harrier Whiskey 750ml
R54.99 each



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Figure 5: July 2015 edition of Obslife, discussing the decision within the ONW to discourage the carrying of

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July 2015
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Obs Watch says no to firearms

WITH a majority of 65%, Observatory Neighbourhood Watch (ONW) members voted against the carrying of firearms on ONW patrols. The vote was held after a number of members of the newly revived organisation asked if they could carry their licensed firearms on patrol for self-defence purposes.

"The law is not prescriptive in this case and we decided to take a democratic vote to resolve the matter," said Steve Killick, ONW deputy chair.

The vote was held by secret ballot at the most recent monthly meeting of the ONW. Emailed votes were also counted.

In the debate preceding the vote, those against the carrying of firearms argued that patrollers could possibly become targets for robbers looking for firearms, and that the possible presence of guns may cause criminals to react irrationally and become violent, putting all ONW patrollers at greater risk.

Police sector manager for Obs, Const Mark Berry, also argued against carrying firearms, saying that it can cause more problems than it could solve.

The vote itself was controversial. Some members felt that the mere raising of the question carried the risk of

Obs Improvement District (Obsid) COO Hudson McComb refers to a map of Obs during a discussion of the Obsid's public safety patrol strategy with residents, including (from left) Obs Civic Association chair Marc Turok, researcher Leah Junck, resident Gwen Derymaeker and Obsid safety manager Hannes Bronkhorst. See p 7.



giving the ONW a gun-toting reputation.

Mr Killick said carrying firearms is against the neighbourhood watch's mandate, which is only to observe and report criminal activity. "It may jeopardise the integrity of our organisation if there was an accident or incident involving a sanctioned firearm on a patrol," he said.

Subsequent to the vote, Mr Killick told ObsLife that some ONW members intend to become official peace officers, which involves training. Such peace officers, who serve as volunteer City Law Enforcement reservists, may carry firearms on patrols, but they will have to be

clearly distinguished as peace officers.

At the meeting it was agreed that the ONW should focus on growing the number of patrols. The ONW, with more than 105 members, still does not have a formal patrol roster. Patrols are currently carried out on an ad hoc basis.

Mr Killick said they have about 15 members who patrol regularly.

"Our role is to report anything suspicious to the OPS or SAPS staff on duty and then stand back and observe. We then monitor the situation until they arrive on the scene."

Join neighbourhood watch, Obsid urges – page 7.

Hunters Cider 440ml
Dry or Gold
R64.99 per 6-pack





OBZ

Chateau Libertas 750ml
R34.99 each





Harrier Whiskey 750ml
R86.99 each



Wellington VO Brandy 750ml
R96.99 each



Sedgewicks Old Brown Sherry 750ml
R25.99 each

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firearms on patrol. The picture shows me with members of the Obsid public safety patrol strategy meeting.

Figure 6: Figure 4: June 2015 edition of Obslife, discussing the closure of 'rogue pubs' as a strategy to combat

Obslife

June 2015 Tel: 021 811 7654 Neighbourhood news, taken seriously www.obslife.co.za info@obslife.co.za

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Rogue pub battle at fever pitch

IT IS too soon to claim victory, but recent developments around the tik and heroin infested club Ezithebeni Braai Lounge in Lower Main Road provides hope that it is possible for community action to close down a problem bar.

Until the recent temporary closure of Ezithebeni - it is still not a certainty - problem clubs in Obs have only ever closed down because of rental disputes with their landlords, and never because of action taken by law enforcement agencies against their flagrant disregard for their liquor licence conditions.

The clamp-down on Ezithebeni is the first to have resulted from community pressure on the authorities to take action, even though the process has exposed just how ineffectual they still are in regulating the liquor trade.

It started last month when ObsLife exposed the fact that Ezithebeni was trading without a valid liquor licence. The current owners, led by Don Khan, had bought the bar more than two years ago from its founder, Daniel Lossi, but had never bothered to apply for a transfer of the liquor licence onto their name, as required by law. Mr Lossi had agreed

with the new owners that they could continue trading for a while on his licence.

This became a permanent state of affairs. For the first two years, Mr Lossi renewed his licence without telling the Liquor Authority that he had sold the club, and by the time the licence came up for its third annual renewal Mr Khan and his co-owners renewed it themselves, but still in the name of Mr Lossi.

In order to ensure proper control of liquor sales, the Liquor Act states that the liquor licence holder or a formally appointed manager must at all times be present at the business when liquor is sold. The arrangement between Mr Lossi and Ezithebeni over the use of his liquor licence was therefore illegal.



Ezithebeni owner Don Khan (middle) faces down an attempt by the Police to close his rogue pub. Police backed down when he produced an "interdict" obtained from a magistrate against them.

It came to an abrupt end when ObsLife traced Mr Lossi to Sanlam, where he works, and asked him if he knew that his liquor licence facilitated a brazen drug trade on Lower Main Road and that the street-level drug pushers could be seen sauntering in and out of Ezithebeni from about noon every day.

continued on page 12



WHY COOK?

Finest Ingredients - Delicious, Excellent Value

What's for Lunch?		What's for Dinner?	
Fried Hake, Chips & Buttered Roll - Combo	30.00	Beef Curry, Rice & Naan Bread - Combo	25.00
Chicken Curry & Naan Bread - Combo	20.00	Chicken & Butternut Bake - Portion	15.00
Grilled Rib Burger	25.00	Spaghetti Bolognese - Portion	20.00 each
Sausage & Mash - Combo	20.00 each	Spinach & Feta Quiche - Large	40.00
Chicka Chicken Combo 2 Wing Drumstick & Chips - Combo	25.00	Grilled Chops, Roast Potatoes & Vegetables - Combo	25.00

"Quality is our Priority"

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Open till 9pm every day

crime in the suburb.

Figure 7: November 2015 edition of Obslife rendering attempts to increase the cooperation between the ONW and

Obslife

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ONW, Police start collaborating

IN a breakthrough for the re-establishment of a functional neighbourhood watch in Observatory, the recently revived Obs Neighbourhood Watch (ONW) had its first joint patrol with the Woodstock Police recently.

On a recent evening, a group of about a dozen ONW members met the two constables on duty for the evening at the Observatory Improvement District (Obsid) security control room for a short discussion to coordinate their patrols.

It was a brief meeting, but it signalled the start of a shift away from the dysfunctional relationship between the various security projects in Obs.

Steve Killick, the chair of the ONW, said, firstly, the interaction provided an opportunity for the members of the community to meet Const Mlamli Yoko and Melubakho Qhumayo, two of the team of police officers who have been patrolling Observatory for years but with very little social interaction with the community.

Secondly, the encounter provided a first exercise in coordinating patrols. The ONW members split into two



Steve Killick of the ONW (left) discusses patrol areas with Const Mlamli Yoko and Melubakho Qhumayo of the Woodstock Police.

groups, each patrolling a section of Observatory, while the police van patrolled the rest of the suburb during the two-hour long exercise.

The idea is that if such joint exercises could be held during times identified as regular high-crime periods, it could significantly dampen crime.

Thirdly, the officers were given an ONW radio to carry with them in their

patrol van, putting them in direct communication with the ONW and the patrollers of the Obsid.

The ONW and the Obsid recently merged their two radio networks. The remaining challenge was to get the police patrol van on duty to carry an ONW-Obsid handset.

The Observatory sector commander,

continued on page 3



Castle Lite 440ml
Cans R109.99 per 12-pack



Carling Black Label
440ml cans
R109.99 per 12-pack



Savanna Cider
330ml Handles
R54.99 per 6-pack



Smirnoff 1818 Vodka
750ml
R84.99 each





Olmea Tequila
750 ml - R 179.99



J.C. Le Roux Sparkling Wine
750ml
R48.99 each



Three Ships Whisky
750ml
R115.99 each



Wellington VO Brandy
750ml
R92.99 each



4th Street Sweet White, Rosé, or Sweet Red
750ml
R28.99 each

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the police the biggest news of the month.

Figure 8: February 2016 edition of Obslife showing protesters against police brutality and the right to document

Obslife

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NO TO POLICE BRUTALITY:
Members of the Rastafarian community protested in front of the Woodstock police station in solidarity with a local man who was allegedly assaulted by the police during an arrest. Local academic Eduard Grebe filmed the incident and was arrested and detained, only to have the charges against him withdrawn the next day.



Call for right to film police action

By Tamlynne Thompson

THE unlawful arrest of a local academic who tried to film the arrest of a suspect on a drug charge in Observatory has sparked calls to the South African Police to confirm once and for all that citizens may film police action.

Health researcher Eduard Grebe's description on the social-justice news website GroundUp of how he was unlawfully arrested caused a media storm and badly dented the reputation of the Woodstock Police.

Mr Grebe described how he saw two police officers arresting a man close to his home in Obs. Concerned about the

violence of the arrest, he filmed them. One of the officers, Const Mlamli Yoko, ordered him to delete the footage and when he refused, arrested him. He describes how he was kept overnight in grim conditions at the Woodstock police station. Reasons given for his arrest included "riotous behaviour" and interference with the duties of a police officer.

The next morning he was taken to court where he witnessed a horrific assault by a police officer of one of his fellow captives in the back of a police vehicle. He was freed shortly thereafter. No charges were put to him. (www. groundup.org.za/article/i-was-jailed-filming-police-assault).

Mr Grebe has since complained to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) and the Western Cape Police Ombud.

The incident prompted the Woodstock-based Right2Know Campaign to issue an urgent plea to SAPS leadership to send a clear message to Police officers that the public may photograph and film them.

Right2Know quotes the Police's own Standing Order 156, which states that the police may not interfere with jour-

continued on page 10

Smirnoff
1818 Vodka
750ml
R86.99 each



Castle Lite 340ml nrb
R189.99 per case of 24



Wellington
VO Brandy 750ml
- R92.99 each





OBZ

Gordon's Dry
Gin 750ml
R94.99 each



Hunters
Extreme Bold
Cans 440ml
R49.99 per pack of 4



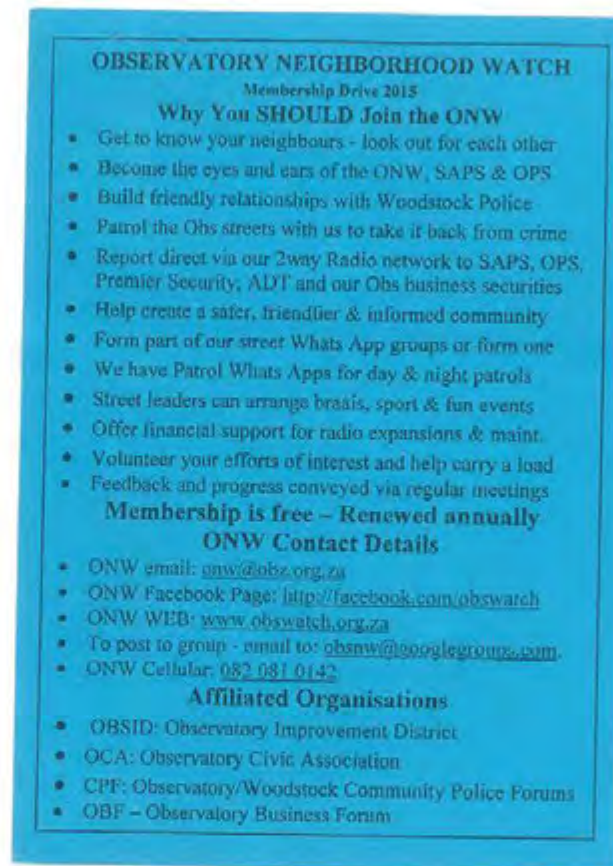
J&B Whisky
750ml
- R129.99 each




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police action on its front page.

Figure 9: Flyer distributed to the households in Observatory at the beginning of 2015.



Figures 10 and 11: Patrol preferences and membership form attached to the flyer in figure 9



PATROL PREFERENCES - February 2015

Dear Observatory Resident

The Observatory Neighbourhood Watch is committed in carrying out organised or impromptu patrols in the Observatory area. Patrols are mostly done in pairs, on foot, by utilisation of vehicles, scooters and bicycles or even set out occasionally with our pet dogs. We are the eyes and ears in our suburb regarding happenings of crime. Even leaving on errands from our home we consider it as a patrol and observe for any crime taking place - we retreat from it, and report the incident to the Police or local Security Provider/s, and then observe from a safe distance. While on patrols we notify the Woodstock Police Station and their vehicles by utilisation of our 2-way radios and or cellular phones. In this way SAPS keeps an eye or ear out for us as well. We also communicate via our 2-way radios with the OBSID Observatory Public Safety Security, Premier Security and occasionally with ADT. We also communicate information or patrol dates with fellow patrollers via our secure email address: onw-patrols@pocologroups.com.

Should you wish to join us on patrols kindly furnish us with your contact details and indicate your patrol preferences as per criteria below. You will then be placed on a Patrol Whats APP group and with your Sector Block Leader who will inform you of our current patrol roster and any other happenings. Our patroller's contact details and 2-way radio call sign list will be forwarded you for ease of slotting in with us and being on top of crime news or trends.

KINDLY INDICATE YOUR PATROL PREFERENCES:

Details Needed	Examples	Your Details
First Name:	----- Your Name -----	
Surname:	----- Your Surname -----	
Home Telephone:	----- Your Telephone No -----	
Cellular Number:	----- Your Cellular No -----	
Street Name & Number:	----- Your Address -----	
E-mail Address:	----- Your Email -----	
Patrol Type:	i.e: Car, Bicycle, Scooter, On Foot, Dogs	
Patrol Frequency:	i.e: Daily - Weekly - Bi-weekly	
Day of the Week:	i.e: Wed's, Sat's or Any Day etc	
Commencement Time:	i.e: 9 am, or 5 pm - Any Time etc	
Patrol Duration:	i.e: ½ hr - 1 hr - 2½ hrs - or 3 hrs etc	
Transportation Available:	i.e.: Car - Scooter - Bicycle - Skateboard - Nil	
Comments or Suggestions:		


Your participation in the patrols, whether great or small, is sure to make a difference. Kindly fax your preferences to 021 448 2824, or send per e-mail to: alvescolette@gmail.com, or drop it off at 49 Scott Road, we will then soon make contact with you.

All for a Safer Suburb in Observatory

COLETTE ALVES
ONW PATROL COORDINATOR - 2015
 Cellular: 084 208 1584

Figure 10

Figure 11



ONW Membership Form

Attach
 45mm x 35mm
 Passport size
 colour photo

Name

I.D. No

Address

Telephone No

Cell phone No

Email Address

Area of Interest

☐ Patrols

☐ Communication Technologies

☐ Finance

☐ Administration

☐ Information Technologies

☐ Operations

☐ Recruiting

☐ CCTV Equipment

☐ Marketing

☐ Other:

☐ Financial Assistance via Donations or Debit:

Standard Bank Current Account: 075172925 - Mowbray Branch Code: 024909

Indemnity

I do hereby:

1. Acknowledge that I have read the Constitution and Code of Conduct of the Observatory Neighborhood Watch and fully understand the contents thereof.
2. Acknowledge that I have chosen to be a member of the Observatory Neighborhood Watch and voluntarily participate in the activities of the Observatory Neighborhood Watch.
3. Acknowledge further that the Observatory Neighborhood Watch is not a corporate entity established by or under any law, nor does it have a juristic personality.
4. Indemnify the aforesaid Observatory Neighborhood Watch, its committee and other members, in respect of any criminal or civil liability, against any cost, claims, suits or damages howsoever arising directly or indirectly from any intentional act or omission or any negligence on my part.

Signed at on this day of20.....

Full name and signature of member	Full name and signature of witness

Please return this form to your Block or Street Leader or drop off at 49 Scott Road, Observatory. These forms can also be delivered to the OBSID office at 41 Station Road or handed in at the Library in Station Road and advise: 082 926 1220. You can also fax the completed form to 021 448 2824 or scan and email it to jamesobserv@gmail.com. Membership is renewed on a yearly basis and members will receive an ONW Photo ID card to identify themselves when on patrol.

ONW DATA MANAGER - 2015